UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 001 143 760 5

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

# *Through the Casentino*

ST FRANCIS BY DELLA ROBBIA (LA VERNA)

# Through the Casentino

*with Hints for the Traveller by*

*Lina Eckenstein*

*Illustrated by Lucy Du Bois-Reymond*

*London:* *J. M. Dent & Co.*

*Aldine House, 29 and 30 Bedford Street*

*Covent Garden, W.C.* ❖ ❖ 1902

*All Rights Reserved*

DG
734
E19t

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

*The Casentino* . . . . . PAGE 1

CHAPTER II

*Bibbiena and Cardinal Bibbiena* . . . 13

CHAPTER III

*La Verna and St Francis* . . . . 33

CHAPTER IV

*Camaldoli and St Romuald* . . . . 51

CHAPTER V

*In the Apennines* . . . . . 77

CHAPTER VI

*Poppi and Counts Guidi* . . . . 90

CHAPTER VII

*Capo d'Arno* . . . . . 113

*Hints for the Traveller* . . . . 133

*Index* . . . . . 143



752167

# ILLUSTRATIONS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| *St Francis by della Robbia (La Verna)* | *frontispiece* |
| *Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna* . . . | 3 |
| *Bibbiena Market-place* . . . . . | 14 |
| *Situation of La Verna* . . . . | 34 |
| *Vine Cultivation (Casentino)* . . . | 36 |
| *Entrance to La Verna* . . . . | 43 |
| *Camaldoli (Casentino)* . . . . . | 53 |
| *Courtyard of Camaldoli* . . . . | 73 |
| *Landmark of Camaldoli* . . . . | 76 |
| *Castle of Poppi (Casentino)* . . . | 91 |
| *Courtyard of Castle, Poppi* . . . . | 99 |
| *Statue of Count Guido, Castle of Poppi* . | 109 |
| *Arms of the Guidi* . . . . . | 112 |
| *Church of Romena (Casentino)* . . . | 114 |
| *Castel San Niccolo* . . . . . | 123 |
| *Map* . . . *at the end of the Volume* | |

# THROUGH THE CASENTINO

## "col cavallo di San Francesco"

### I

### *The Casentino*

" Li ruscelletti, che de' verdi colli
Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
Facendi i lor canali e freddi e molli
Sempre mi stanno innanzi. . . .'
(*Inf.* 30, 65 ff.)

The Casentino is the name given to the upper valley of the Arno, where the river, rising in numerous streams on the slopes of the Falterona, flows southwards for about forty miles before it swings round in its course and runs north-westwards in the direction of Florence. The district, to use the words of a modern Italian writer, is "formed by nature in the shape of a basket"—those oval flower-baskets we see carried about the streets of Florence— " with its lowest part green with meadows, fields and vineyards, and encircled and, so to say, closed in by lofty mountains." It is a district rich in memories of

Dante and other associations. The halo of early Christian life, the gloom and splendour of feudal times, and the glow of the Renaissance, all linger here. And many beauties of nature, many feasts of the imagination here await the traveller who foregoes for a time the hasty temper of the tourist.

It was late one afternoon in April when we left the train at Bibbiena, and, shouldering our knapsacks, wended our way up from the station to the town. We were well in the land of the ancient Etruscans, that mysterious and visionary people whose fleet swept the Tyrrhenian Sea at a time when the greatness of Rome was not. Like other Etruscan cities, Bibbiena lies on the summit of a hill, and many examples of Etruscan art industry have been discovered in its neighbourhood.

It had been cold and cheerless in the noisy Italian train rattling up from Arezzo. A dull, stormy sky gave a desolate aspect to the irregular country and cast a shadow over the rugged mountains. But as we climbed the hill of Bibbiena our spirits rose. Side valleys opening up in different directions revealed winding roads and castle-crowned elevations; Poppi, with its soaring tower, stood up in bold outline; the higher mountains, many of them snow-capped, seemed to unite in one bold, forcible sweep. Which of these heights sheltered Camaldoli,

CHIESA MAGGIORE, LA VERNA

with its reminiscences of St Romuald?—which the retreat of La Verna, with its thoughts of St Francis? Our anticipations were in no way damped when we found ourselves half an hour later sitting in the little dining-room of the Albergo Amorosi. Certainly the chief merit of the broth was its warmth,—the pigeon was not drawn, though it was tender,—and the cheese could never have suggested the difference between this commodity and chalk. But the delicious fried artichokes, and the assurance of mine host that to-morrow he could procure anything we pleased, went far to restoring our confidence. It was Easter Sunday, visitors could hardly have been expected at this late hour. Besides, the bedrooms and general appurtenances of the place were unexceptionable. So we made the best of our meal, examined the visitors' book with deliberate curiosity, and then we sat down by the window and watched the fading light of day across a bit of old-fashioned garden, with its blossoming almond tree, the tender green of the budding fig, and the rusty black of a row of cypresses between us and the distant mountains.

Looking back to the time when the Casentino as such emerges from the dimness of the unrecorded past, we find obscurity hanging over this district longer than over adjacent parts of Tuscany. The circle of its enclosing mountain gave the Casentino a remoteness, which qualified

its fate in the past as it adds a special colour to its life of to-day. The period of Etruscan independence and the period of Roman rule have left few obvious traces; it is of the times following the barbarian invasion that the district chiefly speaks. When men are thrown into new surroundings, new qualities come into play. There is something fascinating in analysing the influence which race has had upon race, and the results of bringing peoples of different degrees of culture into juxtaposition. All that survived of Roman culture and learning after the advent of the barbarians was to be found in the towns. The German invaders on the banks of the Arno, as on those of the Rhine, were impatient of the restraints of mutual dependence—they avoided life in cities. Once in possession of new lands, the leaders of the conquering host divided, each leader sought a centre of authority for himself, and the lesser military chiefs strove to equal the autonomy of the greater. Solitary and as reserved towards compeers as the eagle, these men made their homes by preference on rocky heights, which nature protected against surprise, and which the art of defence succeeded in rendering almost impregnable.

History chronicled at least four distinct barbarian descents into Northern Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries. Different races and different branches of the same race ousted one

another from possession of the land. When the tumult of contrary tides subsided, the Langobards held the sway, which they retained for over two hundred years. The Langobard's spirit is that of the hunter—it lives to this day in the architectural decorations of North Italian churches, where the bristling boar and the leashed hound, the fierce wolf and the rampant lion, the flying deer and the hungry bird, with nondescript monsters of various kinds, do service in ornamenting façades, supporting columns and relieving capitals.

We know little concerning the settling of Langobard chiefs in the Casentino, but the district, with its fruitful upland tracts, its rocky elevations and wooded side valleys, had great attractions for the invaders, since it favoured the mode of life they held dear. When authentic records begin, many strongholds of the district were in the hands of men who were Langobards by descent, and who became progenitors of some of the most distinguished families of Tuscany. Among these the Guidi claim special attention. For the history of this family decided for the history of the Casentino for over four hundred years. No family attained a power at all equalled by theirs, no family so deeply impressed the mind of Dante, and none is so frequently mentioned in the Divine Comedy.

It was against the further advance of the Langobards that the Pope in the eighth century called upon the loyal Franks to interfere in behalf of the temporal estates of the Church. Once again the fertile plains of Italy were overrun by Germans, but in this case by Germans who had grasped the idea of a centralised system of government. Before the unity of the Franks the scattered and divided nobles of Italy were as chaff before the wind. The greater number of her dukes, counts and barons recognised Frankish over-lordship, and in due course became feudatories to the Empire. This relation eventually secured to the Emperor his staunchest allies against the growing Italian communes—it in no way debarred the Italian nobles from living as independent chiefs, warring against one another as personal hatred, jealousy and private revenge prompted. The distinguishing qualities of these men—they may well be called virtues—were audacity, enterprise and a boundless self-reliance. But they were qualities unseparated as yet from the revolting contempt for life and limb of a rough barbarian age, a contempt that found expression in wanton stabbing, poisoning and mutilation as a convenient mode of retaliation on enemies.

But a safeguard necessary to the very existence of these men now lay in their recognition of the claims of the Church. The Pope, as a

temporal ruler, might be defied; as a spiritual ruler, who had hosts untold at his command, he was a power and a strength to be respected. Turbulent barons, whose play often ended in bloodshed, began to defer to the priest and to patronise the monk. The ascent to the stronghold was flanked by a chapel, and monastic colonies were invited to settle in the most fruitful districts.

There can be no doubt that the men who, thus prompted, accepted Mother Church, accepted her from purely utilitarian motives. But Mother Church was apparently content to dwell with them on the terms proposed, for she blessed them with many blessings. Exactly those dynasties prospered whose piety is borne out by the numerous endowments which they made. Certainly these were made on conditions which left a loophole for interference on the part of those who made them. But the greater prevails over the lesser, whatever terms the lesser may make. The Church entered into the alliance in obedience to a call from the barons, but in course of time she shook herself free from their control.

The history of the Casentino illustrates the sequence of these changes. Few rocky heights but are crowned by the ruins of a stronghold, few upland expanses but preserve the remembrance of an ancient monastery. The word

*badia*, the ancient term for monastery, survives in a number of local names, such as Badia a Tega, Badia a Prataglia. These monasteries went through stormy experiences towards the close of the tenth century, and all owing to the high-handed manner in which their patrons dealt with them. The Church was defiled by iniquity of traffic. On the one side laymen sold Church property and privileges, simony in the wider sense of the word. On the other, ecclesiastics themselves traded in benefices, simony in its narrower sense.

One of the important movements set on foot to oppose this evil is associated with the name of St Romuald, and through him with the Casentino, where the monastery of Camaldoli most directly embodied and most religiously preserved the spirit of one of Christianity's most zealous champions. Camaldoli in the course of centuries has attracted visitors of many tempers from many countries. In Dante's estimation Romuald was so important a person that he pictured him in Paradise as one of the chosen two whom St Benedict pointed out to him by name.

Among those whom the fame of Romuald brought to the Casentino was St Francis of Assisi. On his journey he passed La Verna, that solitary mountain height in the Apennines which appeared to him as a chosen spot for

meditation. Many visitors come to see La Verna in the Casentino who come there to see nothing else, especially of late years, since a less prejudiced view of the saints has helped to restore the importance of St Francis on a wider basis than that of a purely devotional interest.

But not only the votaries of St Francis find a shrine at which to pay homage in the Casentino. Since the publication of the *Voyages Dantesques* by Ampère, every student of Dante longs to wander among these hills, for here the poet stayed at different periods of his life, and here his admirers are especially able to appreciate those occasional references to the beauties of nature, which are as manna in the wilderness among the terrible descriptions of Hell and Purgatory. In the Casentino Dante fought in his youth, hither he came in his manhood to stay with the Counts Guidi when Florence had closed her gates to him. And again the revived study of Dante's works during the Renaissance was directly associated with the Casentino. Cristofero Landini, who first published a commentary on Dante, was from there; and Bandini, who wrote a famous work on the revival of learning in Italy, describes this revival in connection with Landini, and prefaces his work by an account of the numerous distinguished men to whom the Casentino gave birth.

Thus on the very point of entering the Casentino were we made to pause and call to remembrance some of those periods which associated the district with so much that is worthy of recollection. If knowledge be the wing wherewith we fly to heaven, it is also the key wherewith to unlock the treasures of this earth. And it seemed the more needful to recall the distinguishing features of the past as the different periods gained in importance when seen on a wider historical background. But discursiveness too has its limits. Wisely were the words spoken, "a time to break down and a time to build up." It so happened that we had each brought a copy of Dante, though books are not a pleasant burden on a walking tour. But the trouble of carrying them was well repaid by the enjoyment we derived from studying them during the evening hours while in the land in which we were so frequently reminded of the poet.

## II

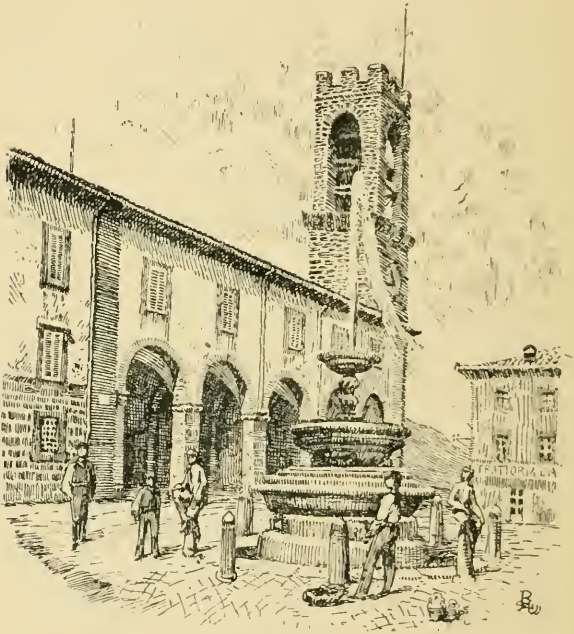
### *Bibbiena and Cardinal Bibbiena*

"Bibbiena 'che una terra è sopr' Arno molto amena."
(Berni: *Orlando Innamorato*, 3, 7. 1.)

THE town of Bibbiena boasts of no special architecture and of no great works of art, but it has all the characteristic charm of a Tuscan hill city. Looked at from without, the remains of its great walls and the substructure of its buildings suggest line upon line of successive ages of builders; within, there are the usual open spaces and narrow streets, with sudden changes from dazzling sunlight to dim coolness. Apparently the town has not spread since it was dismantled at the beginning of the sixteenth century; its limits are still marked by the remains of its walls. And, as in all walled cities, its buildings, churches, palaces, dwelling-houses and store-houses stand shoulder to shoulder, the more important buildings stretching to greater height and overlooking the less important ones.

On ordinary days the town was quiet enough. Few people were seen abroad and the noise of a vehicle was an event. But inside the houses

various trades were plied. The main streets of the place were lined with vaulted cavernous shops, the doors of which were thrown open,



BIBBIENA MARKET-PLACE

and in the deep, shady recesses men were busy at work. As usual in hill cities, blacksmiths' shops were numerous, and the owners of all seemed well employed. And as one passed along the street—those narrow, stony Italian

streets—one's attention was arrested by the sound of hammering. Presently the hammering ceased, the bellows stirred up a rush of sparks, and for a moment a ruddy light fell on the bending cyclopean figures at work, or perhaps on the bellows themselves, a panting monster couchant on the hearth. From the braziers' shops sounded the din of the strokes falling on the metal. These shops too were numerous, and their roofs could hardly be seen for the number of large-bellied copper water pots hanging there. The roof too of the shop of smoked wares was almost invisible from rows upon rows of suspended sausages and hams, each tightly confined in a close network of string. There was the weaver's workshop, from which sounded the regular thud of the beam thrown back on the woof, and there was the wheelwright's, with its smell of stored timber and its floor strewn with crisp shavings as they were taken off by the plane. The greengrocer's store was but a poor one as yet ; there were lumps of boiled spinage and bunches of young artichokes, no other green-meats, but there were lemons, oranges, nuts and dried figs in plenty. There was the drug store too, with its clean, cool, deserted look. The apothecary and a friend were sitting down to a game of cards one day when we passed, and looked up in surprise as we entered in the hope of coming upon

some pots of Savona ware—a desire for which was strong in the new-fledged M.D. Then there was the barber's shop, with its nimble master, who could be seen operating on a customer, and the small window with panes of glass behind which the watchmaker sat bending over his work.

On market-days the town assumed a look of greater liveliness. Two-wheeled country carts came toiling up the hill. They were left on the terrace below or on one side of the market-place, and their inmates stood about in groups with the men of the town who had stopped work for the day. A number of stalls were set up on the market-place and wares of many kinds were displayed. There were stalls of butchers' meat, loaded with the tiniest of lambkins, a sorry sight; there were stalls with a show of ribbons and laces, all of the cheapest; stalls with bales of homespun; stalls with hats and caps of felt. And on the ground brown and yellow and red earthenware was heaped up or spread about, jars and platters, and pots and pans, in the plainest of forms but most decorative in colour.

On such a day selling extended down the side streets. And the vendor of cheap literature was seen suspending tracts and booklets in rows by means of bits of string, while the hawker of cheap jewellery took advantage of a projecting window-ledge to set out his little trays. The

display of outlandish wares invariably causes one's money to burn, and one of us was tempted to buy a silver finger-ring with a crucified Christ —a pattern peculiar to Tuscany, I believe—while the other, from a mass of twopenny romances and stories of the saints, picked out the romance of Pia dei Tolomei, the story of a faithful wife's cruel treatment and violent death. This was she, unforgotten in popular literature as it seemed, who started up before Dante in Purgatory and prayed him to recall her memory on earth.

But it was at night, when the dark of the evening filled the streets with gloom, when the last carts had rattled down the steep streets and were speeding away along the white country roads in the darkness, when men passed along the walls like shadows, and silence had laid her hold on the concerns of this world, that fancy began to stir and breathe more freely, and stepped forth to take her pleasure with the figures of the past.

One evening I had stayed in the Franciscan church looking at the altar-pieces of the Della Robbias, the Nativity and the Deposition—the latter a gift to the church from Cardinal Bibbiena—till the twilight drove me out and I went to walk on the terrace of the town, which commanded a view of the panorama of the hills. There had been a thunderstorm, and heavy

rain-clouds hung over the Apennines. Their lower slopes were shrouded in mist, but spanned from side to side by a rainbow. Towards the south the skyline above the valley of the Arno was piled with masses upon masses of clouds. Further yet, towards the west, the sun had just set behind a rocky height, but its reflection was caught by the white vapour that filled the undulating plain and extended upwards into the numerous branching valleys beneath the snow-capped heights of the Pratomagno, revealing line upon line of rocky crag and sloping hillside It was a sight that stirred emotion and roused the imagination. And wandering back through the dark, solitary streets, I seemed to see some of the figures of the shadowy past, whose mortal remains long ago had fallen to dust and decay, nay, for aught we knew, had gone to build up new forms of life again and again under the transforming agency of time.

Had they not all walked and talked here, the Etruscan potter, cunning of hand, worthy fore-runner of the Tuscan painter of the Quat-trocento?—The Roman centurion, proud of a system of government which embraced the known world, never equalled before, never since?—The Langobard hunter—the soft-treading monk—the sister of charity—had they not all walked and talked in sight of the surrounding hills? And had not these streets seen some of those feuds

between commune and commune, very thorns in the eyes of Italian liberty in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the hope of national unification was shattered, and that for centuries to come, by the rise of the *condottieri*, those upstart rulers, spoilt children of fortune, to whom Italian history owes some of its most sombre and also some of its brightest pages? There is no English equivalent for the word *condottiere*, the thing and the term for it are unknown outside Italy. For in Italy alone a combination of peculiar circumstances made it possible for men, who were gifted with unlimited determination, to watch their opportunity inside the separate townships and to snatch at the reins of independent government by the help of mercenary troops, a tool, dangerous in itself, which they handled with consummate ability.

The development of communal life in the cities of northern Italy had been early. But placed between Emperor and Pope the citizens of different towns split into factions; some preferred allegiance to an Emperor who was on the other side of the Alps, others, more national in feeling, sided with the Pope. But when the respective authority of Pope and Emperor became a matter of dispute, and each sought to support his claims by introducing foreign armies into Italy, all alike were thrown off their balance.

Under these circumstances the joint action of citizens was inconceivable, much more the joint action of different cities, to the common end of national consolidation. Worn out by party conflicts, townships at last succumbed to the high-handed government of a military leader who brought security if nothing else, and the Republican Government of city after city fell a prey to men whose attitude recalled that of the tyrants of classical antiquity. For among the *condottieri* also there were men famous for their misdeeds, yet whose despotism was relieved by a trait of grandeur. Among them also there were men who held the prosperity of their subjects dear at heart and who made their courts into centres of learning and polite intercourse. A stormy period was followed by comparative quiet, and the arts of peace found their best patrons among parvenu princes.

The town of Bibbiena had experienced her share of these vicissitudes. Subject at one time to the Prince Bishop of Arezzo, the town was besieged and appropriated by the Republic of Florence, snatched back by members of the powerful Tarlati family, and reconquered by Florence thirty years later. For its vicinity to Florence, combined with its comparative remoteness, made Bibbiena a dangerous neighbour in times of warfare. This was especially the case after the expulsion from Florence of the

Medici in 1494, when Piero, the eldest son and successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent, with his brothers and others, sought the help of Venice. An army of Venetians invaded the Casentino, and made Bibbiena its headquarters. The Florentines, having secured the help of the Sforza of Milan, in their turn invaded the Casentino, laying siege to Bibbiena, and the Venetian army was caught as in a trap. Bibbiena fell, and all possibility of her harbouring the enemies of Florence in the future was removed by the entire demolition of her town walls.

The Medici escaped. Piero, whom his father designated as the "fool," threw himself into the arms of the Borgia and perished a few years later; Giovanni, Lorenzo's "clever" son, who was a cardinal at the age of thirteen, and afterwards Pope Leo X., left Italy to seek solace by travelling in Germany, Flanders and France; and the third brother, the spirited and gifted Giuliano, called by his father the "good," a few years later was staying at the Court of Urbino, together with the devoted friend of the family, Bernardo Divizio, afterwards Cardinal Bibbiena.

And these streets had seen him often, in obscure youth and again in the pride of successful manhood, Bernardo Divizio, surnamed Bibbiena, true representative of the spirit of the late Italian Renaissance, with its bound-

less faith in its own wisdom. Author of that most spirited and most licentious comedy, the *Calandra*, *maître-de-plaisir* at the court of Leo X., patron of Rafael, self-conscious, versatile, handsome, with glowing eye and scornful lip, he lives in the portrait which Rafael painted of him. Count Baldassare Castiglione, in his famous analysis of the *Perfect Courtier*, introduced Bibbiena as the man of mirth and wit. Paolo Giovio, the historian, to whose facile pen posterity owes so many biographies, says much in praise of him. Bembo addressed to him some of his most pleasing letters, and all accounts corroborate the impression produced by Bibbiena's writings as they lie before us, and by the man's portrait as it hangs in the Pitti, painted by one of the greatest artists the world has known.

Bernardo Divizio was of an obscure family of Bibbiena. The story that the Divizi had changed their name from Tarlati is an obvious invention, and the boy, at the age of nine, was sent to Florence, where his brother was secretary to Lorenzo the Magnificent. He was an able letter-writer at seventeen, and was the constant companion of Lorenzo's son Giovanni, his junior by five years. The two young men rivalled each other in studying literature and the classics, but apparently there was never a cloud between them. Before the Medici went into exile

Bibbiena acted as their envoy, and a letter of his addressed to Piero throws a curious side-light on the kind of love-adventure in which these young men found diversion. At a later period Bibbiena acted as secretary to Giovanni, advocating his cause at the Papal Court with Julius II. Later still he joined Giuliano at the Court of Urbino, which had become the rallying-place of many men of distinction.

For the Montefeltre of Urbino, *condottieri* by origin, belonged to those princes who set before them a high degree of excellence. Duke Federigo, whose boast it was never to have lost a battle, acted as patron to the translators and commentators on the Greek classics; he collected a library at Urbino and built a magnificent palace there. There is something pathetic in the fact that Federigo's son Guidobaldo, himself a confirmed invalid, presided in person over the games by which the young men perfected their physical training. For athletic exercises, no less than culture and good breeding, were the object of attention at Urbino, where the best aspirations of the age, intellectual, artistic and social, found protection. Bramante, who designed St Peter's at Rome, was from Urbino. Rafael was born here, and he always retained an affection for the home of his childhood, which he frequently visited. Several of his earlier pictures, including

Christ on the Mount of Olives, were painted for Duke Guidobaldo. Guidobaldo's wife, Elisabetta, was a Gonzaga of Mantua, a family of origin and ambitions similar to those of the Montefeltre at Urbino. And when her delicate husband had retired to rest, the Duchess, with the witty Lady Emilia Pia, entertained the company in her apartments, where social accomplishments and literary talents were fully displayed.

It was at these reunions that the discussions took place which Count Castiglione has immortalised in the *Cortegiano*, a book famous in its time, which has been translated into English more than once under the title, *The Courtier, or the Perfect Gentleman and Gentlewoman*. A number of distinguished visitors are represented as being assembled in the rooms of the Duchess, and among them are the names of several whose fame has descended through other channels. Here Count Lodovico Canossa spoke of the courtier's outward bearing and behaviour, pursuing the questions into such byeways as, How far self-praise was commendable, and, How negligence could be affected without becoming unpleasant. When he had spoken Bibbiena was called upon to analyse how far facetiousness was compatible with good breeding, and he illustrated his argument by witticisms, *bon-mots*, and accounts of practical jokes in

endless variety, a collection which forms a valuable addition to our knowledge of the *facetiæ* of the Renaissance. Bibbiena's plea for fun was founded on the observation, I do not know if originally due to him, to Castiglione, or to some older writer, that man is the only living being capable of laughter. The company fully appreciated his jokes and the way he told them. To us, many of them seem rather out of date. One wonders that men of culture should have cared for humour that was so broad, and especially, that they should have thought fit to enlarge on it in the presence of ladies. Not that the stories in themselves have any of the offensiveness of those tales with which Boccaccio's company amused themselves a century and a half earlier. On the contrary, Bibbiena maintained that in good society no pleasantry was acceptable which detracted from a woman's honour, a remark which led up to the discussion of the perfect lady and of the nature of love. Giuliano de' Medici, a known champion of women, espoused their cause in a spirit which cannot fail to delight all women who read the work. In the animated discussion which followed, Octaviano Fregoso, afterwards doge of Genoa, Bembo, Aretino and the Lady Emilia Pia all took part.

To judge from the Cortegiano, Bibbiena was not only handsome, but he was renowned for

taking pride in his good looks, and in an age of self-consciousness he appeared as most self-conscious. The sentiments which he aroused and the impression which he made were ever present to his mind. And his self-consciousness was matched by his self-assurance. He apparently loved to give the conversation a personal turn, and to carry off feigned criticism of himself in a spirit of banter. When Count Lodovico insisted on beauty of feature as necessary to the perfect courtier, the conversation took an undesired turn. But Bibbiena recalled it and restored good-humour by drawing attention to himself. "As for grace and beauty of feature," he said, appealing to Lodovico, "I know I have my share, the reason, as you know, why so many ladies fall in love with me, but as for beauty of person I am somewhat in doubt, especially regarding my legs, which are not as well shaped as I would have them. . . . Explain more particularly what you mean by beauty of person that I may be freed from suspense and my mind set at rest."

Bibbiena not only entertained the company at Urbino with talk. His great triumph there was the performance, in 1508, of the *Calandra*, one of the earliest comedies in Italian prose. It called forth acclamations of delight among contemporaries; two generations later its flagrant indecencies had relegated it to oblivion. A full

description of the performance was forwarded to Count Lodovico Canossa by Count Castiglione, who, judging from the tone of his letter, had a hand in the *mise-en-scène*. The curious part about this is its striving for realism. There is the downright realism of a street with palaces and an octagonal church, a town-wall and fortifications, partly decorated in stucco, for the comedy, and the affected realism of would-be classical figures and accessories for the interludes. And this a hundred years before improvised hoardings did service at the first representations of Shakespeare, or a hundred and fifty years before Inigo Jones designed elaborate sceneries for the representation of masques in England.

The *Calandra* itself was composed on the model of the *Menechmi* of Plautus, and is not without likeness to the *Comedy of Errors*. But in this case the two persons whose likeness gives rise to laughable mistakes are twins, brother and sister, neither of whom is aware of the other's presence in the same town. The brother sometimes dresses up as a woman to gain access to his mistress, the sister sometimes wears men's clothes to avoid detection. In the prologue the spectators are called upon to decide for themselves who is on the stage, brother or sister, a mystifying *quid pro quo* which apparently was a source of endless discussion and amusement to the perplexed audience. A vulgar husband,

who is said to be drawn from life, and a witty go-between, are the most individual characters. A necromancer is introduced and is credited with transforming men into women, and this gives an opportunity for ridiculing the current belief in magic.

The play was in five acts. At the close of each act came an interlude, by which the classical taste of the age was gratified. There was Jason ploughing the field with imitation bulls which snorted real fire ; he sowed dragons' teeth, which presently started up into men who fell to performing a morisc or morris-dance. At the close of the second act Venus appeared in a chariot drawn by cupids, who bore flaming torches ; they set free a number of gallants, who likewise performed a dance. Then came Neptune seated on a car, surrounded by sea monsters, the account of whose dance recalls the displays of a modern Christmas pantomime. Later on Juno appeared surrounded by a bevy of birds—peacocks, eagles, ostriches, parrots—all so entertaining in their antics that Castiglione knows no limit to his praise of them. The entire interludes were acted by children, whose freshness and want of affectation were felt a welcome change from the conventionality of the professional actors. The performance closed with an epilogue, in which Cupid spoke of love as the guiding power of life, and enlarged on the

blessings of peace as opposed to the terrors of war.

The success of the performance was such that six years later (1514), when Giovanni de' Medici had become Pope Leo X., and Bibbiena had been made cardinal by him, the play was repeated at Rome in the Papal Court for the entertainment of Isabella d'Este, Countess of Mantua. The Pope was persuaded by his cardinal to be present, and again no trouble was spared to secure a look of reality to the stage. Its decoration was entrusted to Perruzzi, who was studying architecture at Rome under Bramante, and whose marvellous talent for perspective equalled his fame as an architect. It was he who designed and built the Farnesina, the ceiling of which Rafael decorated with the history of Cupid and Psyche.

The name of Cardinal Bibbiena is indissolubly connected with the pontificate of Leo X., a period of which contemporaries spoke as the Golden Age restored. Giovio has left a most enthusiastic description of the life at Rome at the time. Art and learning, which had received new impulses, thanks to the determined policy of Julius II., found as liberal a patron in Leo. Bramante was at work raising the walls of St Peter's, Michael Angelo was painting the Sistine Chapel, Rafael was devoting his energies to the Stanze and the Loggie of the Vatican.

And at the same time Sadoleto, the famous Latinist, and his friend Bembo, distinguished alike as historian and art-connoisseur, were attached to the Papal Court in the capacity of secretaries. Pope Leo was surrounded by a circle of men of merit, and in this circle Cardinal Bibbiena played no subordinate part. His advice, we are told, was worth having in serious and in frivolous matters; and, judging from letters extant, he inspired Bembo with warm feelings of affection. We are told that his ready wit made it easy for him at any time to divert Leo, and in the matter of art his tastes fell in with those of his patron. It was for Cardinal Bibbiena that Rafael painted a small chamber in the Vatican Palace which is still known as the Cardinal's bathroom. It was designed in the style of the antique wall-paintings which had been discovered in the *thermæ* at Rome. Small scenes were introduced among arabesques on the walls, and the subjects of these scenes were chosen by the Cardinal and recall the interludes of the *Calandra*. On each picture Cupid was depicted, driving sometimes birds, sometimes butterflies or other insects, to show the power of love over the animal world. Cardinal Bibbiena had taken a great fancy to Rafael; he persuaded him to become engaged to his niece Maria Antonia. The painter found he could not refuse though his affections

were elsewhere. But he deferred the marriage from year to year, and his premature death cut off the possibility of the alliance.

Thanks to the efforts of the men whom Leo assembled about him, Rome enjoyed a time of undisturbed prosperity—a time of which all who care for buildings and books think with admiration and approval—a time when, once again in the history of mankind, all the elements of culture of which the age seemed capable were developed to their fullest and completest extent. And this while northern Europe, full of anger and discontent, was preparing to meet the coming storm, while travellers returned from Italy chiefly impressed by her vices, while England was waxing wroth at the thought of Papal extravagance, and Germany welcomed the charge that the Pope was a monstrosity with acclamation.

But, nevertheless, none but a northern European, sick at heart at the losses inflicted on his country by the Reformation, could look upon the men who made the greatness of this period at Rome as whited sepulchres. For they have all come down to us, drawn from life by Rafael—Pope Julius and Pope Leo, Count Castiglione and Cardinal Bibbiena, and Inghirami, the secretary of Julius, who likened his patron to the Neptune of Virgil, who rose above the waves and the storm was hushed.

Excepting the portrait of Count Castiglione, which is at Paris, all these portraits are at present in the Pitti. And were it not that famous pictures disappear in an unaccountable manner, we should be in possession also of that of the spirited Giuliano de' Medici, for there seems no reason to doubt the information that Rafael painted it.

It is said that Pope Leo owed his election greatly to the able policy of Cardinal Bibbiena; it is said also that, as Leo was troubled with an internal complaint, the cardinal laid his plans for becoming Pope in his turn. If this plan ever existed it was cut short by death. Cardinal Bibbiena died suddenly towards the close of 1520, a few months after Rafael and a few months before Leo.

The palace of the Divizi still stands at Bibbiena adjoining the Franciscan church. The abilities which secured the Cardinal and his brother the goodwill of the Medici, reappeared in the next generation in Angelo Divizio Bibbiena, who became secretary to Cosimo I., first Duke of Florence. After him the Divizi seem to have fallen back into obscurity. Their palace at Bibbiena is now owned by members of a different family.

## III

### *La Verna and St Francis*

" Nel crudo sassa infra Tevere ed Arno
Da Cristo prese l' ultimo sigillo
Che le sue membra du' anni portarno."
(*Par.* 11, 106 ff.)

Our first expedition from Bibbiena was to La Verna, ever memorable through its associations with St Francis of Assisi. Here in the depth of mountain solitude, when the thought of regenerating mankind was strong within him, St Francis found the spot of his heart's desire. Hither he came some ten years later, broken by disappointment and broken in health, but strong in the joy that comes from bearing all things patiently in the consciousness of a pure heart. And here, as the legend tells us, he was quite transformed into Jesus by love and compassion and received the impress of the most holy stigmata.

The retreat of La Verna lies at a distance of about eight miles from Bibbiena, 3720 feet above sea-level, on a plateau that forms a ledge, as it were, on the southern slope of the precipitous Penna. The road from Bibbiena

across the mountains into the valley of the Tiber skirts the Penna, which stands isolated, massive, and beetle-browed, among the loftier but less commanding heights of the Apennines.

SITUATION OF LA VERNA

It is the "rough rock between the Tiber and the Arno," as Dante has called it, a rock which commands a prospect without bounds. For the mountains of Tuscany, the plains of Romagna, and the rugged uplands of Umbria are all

within sight, fading away in the blue distance that embraces the Tyrrhenian sea on one side and the Adriatic on the other. Quite apart from its historical associations, the spot, with its lofty beeches and pines, has many attractions ; the near distance and the far outlook are both equally beautiful.

It was on a warm, sunny morning that we descended the hill of Bibbiena. Beyond the church of the Madonna del Sasso, the road mounted a ridge, and then descended and crossed the river Corsalone. Then began the steep, steady ascent of the Apennines. It was a beautiful day. The heights were lost in the morning haze, the air was laden with the vague perfume of spring growth. There is an Italian proverb which says that April calls up the flowers and May rejoices in their colours. As it was, the sun all around was at work softening sheath and leaf and bud. The hedge-rows were veiled in tenderest green, while here and there they were white with the flaky blossoms of the blackthorn. Violets, primroses, celandine and dark blue bell-hyacinths shone among the verdure of the roadside. Down by the river the fields were green with corn and waving herbage ; further up the brown earth sloping away from the road was planted with trees, their trunks wedded to the stems of the vine. In these parts the vines are trained up pollard

trees, over the stunted tops of which their branches are spread. These branches are then tightly wound round each other, two and two, tied together and their ends turned downwards.

VINE CULTIVATION (CASENTINO)

As we passed along, men were training and binding the vine, singing snatches of a song that ended with a minor cadence. From the hanging ends of the vine the shining sap was dropping, recalling the Italian simile of *piangere a vite tagliata.*

In our progress we passed several roadside shrines, but we found them despoiled of their original contents. We afterwards found that all the open-air shrines of the Casentino have been dealt with in the same manner. In some a rude print or a small china figure has been substituted for the older object of reverence ; oftener the niche is empty and the structure is falling to ruin.

For several miles our road was through land that had been brought under cultivation. Then

it ascended through a wood, and beyond this we reached the uneven grassland of the mountains. The genial warmth of the lowland and the unchecked influence of spring were left behind. The grass on the hillocks was green, but in the hollows it was brown and sodden, as though the numerous patches of snow had only just shrunk away from it. Only here and there, close to the edge of the snow, purple crocuses were bursting through the soft mould of the rifts in the greensward. The silence of mountain solitude reigned undisturbed except for the sound of trickling, dripping water.

The plateau, at the end of which the convent of La Verna stands, is visible from afar. It was between one and two in the afternoon when we left the main road and soon afterwards reached the little inn that stands on the confines of the monastic property. Within its walls, at the foot of the rock, which is here almost perpendicular, a small chapel commemorates the spot where St Francis and his companions paused to rest before scaling the height. "And immediately flocks of birds came from all parts," the legend tells us, "and with singing and beating of their wings they showed the greatest joy and gladness, and surrounded St Francis in such a manner that some perched on his head, some on his shoulders, some on his arms and some on his legs, and some around his

feet. His companions marvelled, but St Francis, all joyful in his spirit, said to them—I see that it is pleasing to our Lord that we live in this solitary mountain, since so much joy is shown at our arrival by our little sisters and brothers, the birds."

This incident in the legend of the saint illustrates one of the most lovable traits in his character—the sense of religious fellowship which united him to whatever claimed his attention in nature. The beasts of the earth, and the birds of the air, fire and water, the wind, the sun, the moon and the clouds—he felt the impress of the divine spirit in every one of them. In the happiest and in the most trying hours of his life he was ever ready to recognise the beneficence of the divine purpose in everything around him. It was this attitude of mind which enabled him not to shrink when the red-hot iron was drawn across his temple in the hope of saving his eye-sight. It was this attitude of mind which inspired him to compose the *Canticle of the Sun*, a hymn which in its simple framing and passionate utterances bears the stamp of the religious fervour of a new era.

The personality and influence of St Francis have great attractions under whatever aspect they be viewed. He is the representative of a new development of Christianity—of the period

when the bearings of Christian teaching on the concerns of daily aud domestic life were first realised, and when the masses of the laity ceased to look upon Christianity as a cult, and began to feel it as a living faith by which conduct could be regulated. It is in this sense that Ruskin, speaking of St Francis, says that it was he who taught men how to behave. By example chiefly. For the bearing of the man who would be guided solely by Christian love and charity had an irresistible charm for those who saw him, and the tidings of his influence, carried beyond the confines of his district by enthusiastic followers, acted as the breath by which latent emotional cravings were everywhere fanned into ardent devotion to the needs of suffering mankind.

To his companions the *Poverello* of Assisi appeared as the true representative of the Lord's anointed, and it was owing to this that the movement which he inaugurated had so great an influence on life, on literature and on art. The measure of the man is not easy to recover. His companions never tired of drawing parallels between him and Jesus of Nazareth, and, as in the case of Jesus, a number of miracles wrought by him were introduced into the descriptions of his life, which throw darkness rather than light on his personality. But the influence of the man may well appear miraculous, considering how instantaneous and far-reaching was the im-

pression which he produced—an impression to which history offers few parallels. This influence is so marvellous that the historian who would show it in the light of cause and effect must needs have a firm hold on the sequence of events that led up to it, and on the prevalent attitude of mind in the different strata of society that prepared it.

The influence of the Franciscan movement on literature and art has been made the subject of a number of interesting inquiries. Ozanam was the first to analyse it in its bearings on Italian poetry. The *Canticle of the Sun* (*Laudes Creaturarum*) by St Francis, is among the earliest poems in the vernacular, and it led to the composition of numerous poems and hymns. Apparently St Francis in early days himself sang the songs of the troubadours, and among his first converts was a troubadour who was afterwards known as Fra Pacifico. Hence an element in the religious poems of the Franciscans which reflects the poet's delight in nature and the beggar's freedom from care. Many celebrated hymns were written by Franciscans, among them the *Dies Irae*, first sung by Thomas of Celano, and the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* written by Jacopone of Todi, a famous and prolific poet. As a companion to the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, the Hymn of the Virgin at the Cross, Jacopone afterwards wrote the *Stabat Mater Speciosa*, the Hymn of the Virgin at the

cradle; the keynote of the one is sorrow, the keynote of the other is joy.

The study of Ozanam on the influence of the Franciscans on Italian literature might be extended to other countries. Some of the earliest and most beautiful writings in Middle English were the outcome of Franciscan influence. Wherever the friars gained a foothold they succeeded in identifying themselves with popular and national interests, and the Christianity which they preached was as a light by which the common realities of life appeared more beautiful and more worthy of praise in sermon and song.

In regard to art, Ruskin long ago drew attention to the spirit which the friars infused into painting; his keen sense of beauty and his desire for religious exaltation were soothed by no art so well as by that of the Quattrocento. In Italian painting the friars inaugurated a new era. Since the days when Byzantine artists had decorated churches and chapels with mosaics, practically no attempt had been made to represent incidents of Biblical history and saint legend in church. The friars were the first to favour the idea of having the stories of religion set forth on a large scale in effective and inexpensive frescoes. And compared to the artists of the Byzantine School, these painters were animated by the health-giving breath of a new kind of realism. To the Byzantine, as interpreted by his

work, dispassionateness appeared as an adjunct of holiness in the saint. The fresco painter, on the contrary, did not hesitate in animating the saints with passion, which appears as additional strength, since it is passion brought well under control.

The Franciscan churches of Italy have recently been made the subject of an inquiry by Thode, who enters also into the incidents of the saint's life which were there represented. In the choice of these incidents the painters were apparently guided by the early accounts of the saint's life, but there is considerable diversity in the scenes which they chose for representation and combined together into a series. The early accounts of St Francis include a life written by Thomas of Celano between 1228 and 1229, which was afterwards re-written ; a life written by three of the companions of St Francis, which was finished in 1246 ; and a life in which St Francis's great follower, Bonaventura, combined all that had previously been written of the saint. It was completed in the year 1260.

But the development of the legend of St Francis did not stop here. The *Little Flowers of St Francis*, which were put into writing in the course of the fourteenth century, describe such incidents in the life of the saint as appealed to popular fancy, set down in a popular form. The thread of historical truth in this book is of the slenderest, and the incidents

as they stand cannot claim to have happened. And yet the *Little Flowers*, in their bluntness and simplicity, have all the charm of an unreflective and uncritical belief in the beauty

ENTRANCE TO LA VERNA

of the new teaching. They give a true picture of humble life in mediæval Italy, and show us the early Franciscans in the light in which they saw themselves. The book was widely read, and the first part, which dealt with St Francis among his followers, was amplified by accounts of the mad and saintly freaks of Fra

Ginepro, and of the steadfastness with which Fra Egidio kept to his resolve of living by the labour of his hands. The influence of the *Poverello* of Assisi was, in fact, felt by the highest and the lowest alike. While current fables made popular heroes of him and his followers, Giotto at Assisi represented the decisive incidents of his life in a series of paintings, which have been likened to an epic, and Dante devoted an entire canto of the *Paradiso* to his praise. In the *Paradiso* the praise of St Francis is sung by St Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the followers of St Dominic, while the praise of St Dominic is sung by St Bonaventura, the most influential of Franciscans, a proof of the bond which united the two orders in Dante's mind. The jealousy which afterwards estranged them was never as pronounced in Italy as north of the Alps. In many churches the figures of St Francis and St Dominic still stand side by side. And Andrea della Robbia, in a most charming relief in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella at Florence, gave expression to the affection of the two orders by representing their founders embracing as they meet.

And how shall we picture him in the flesh, the man who was so close to the best side of the religion and the morality of his age? In the year 1222 St Francis, attracted by the thought of St Benedict, went to stay at the ancient

monastery at Subiaco, and here, in memory of his visit, his portrait was painted on the wall of a chapel which was completed before 1228. On this picture St Francis is represented without the stigmata and without a halo. He wears the penitent's rough garb with a cord round his waist, and he is designated simply as Frater Franciscus. The *Poverello* is seen full face. His figure is slim, his hair and beard are crisp and fair, his face is long and thin. In spite of a certain awkwardness, due no doubt to the painter, he has an appearance of refinement and delicacy well in keeping with the stock from which he had sprung. His large eyes and parted lips suggest the enthusiast; his thin neck and slender hands belong to a physique which might well contract phthisis. There are other early pictures of St Francis. But the great painters who set forth his life's history do not appear to have been directly influenced by them. Thode has shown how, in some parts of Italy, a bearded type of the saint is traditional, in others a beardless type. Sometimes he was painted dark, sometimes fair, sometimes comely in figure, sometimes emaciated. Even Giotto, judging by the two series of pictures he painted, the one at Assisi, the other in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, had before him different ideal types of the saint.

Were it not for the ravages of time, the convent

at La Verna would possess one of the early cycles of pictures representing the story of St Francis. A chapel was erected in 1264 on the spot where St Francis received the most holy stigmata, and Taddeo Gaddi, the godson and pupil of Giotto, was summoned to decorate it. No trace of the work remains. Taddeo's stay at La Verna was however productive of other results. A youth from the neighbouring Pratovecchio, Jacopo Landini, was sent to work under him, and he afterwards went to Florence and gained considerable renown as Jacopo del Casentino. In later life he returned to his native district, where some paintings of his are extant. Vasari includes an account of him in his *Lives of the Painters*, and he tells us that it was due to Jacopo that the painters of Florence first combined together in a guild (*compania e fraternita*) in 1350.

As it stands at present the retreat of La Verna is distinguished chiefly by the large number of its altar-pieces in glazed terra cotta by the della Robbias. Except in the museum at Florence there are nowhere so many fine examples of their work to be found together. They are gifts for the most part from distinguished Florentine families. They include a large altar-piece, on which the Virgin is seen handing her girdle to St Thomas; a Transfiguration, on a large scale, with the figures of the twelve Apostles standing below in beautiful

grouping and the most varied expression. There is a Nativity with the figures of St Francis and St Anthony of Padua behind the Virgin and St Joseph, and an Annunciation; both of these are of exquisite grace. All these altar-pieces and other single figures, such as St Francis, are in the usual style of blue and white. I find them variously attributed to Luca and to Andrea della Robbia. In the gallery on the way to the chapel there is a large Pietà in polychrome. The most beautiful, however, of all is a large altar-piece of the Crucifixion, the sole decoration of the Chapel of the Stigmata.

Slowly we ascended the steep path which led up to the convent. We passed under an archway and found ourselves before the entrance to the main church. The site of La Verna was granted to St Francis by Count Orlando of Chiusi in the year 1213; it was the only gift of a site ever accepted by the saint, who held himself betrothed to poverty. Probably a small church was erected under his direction; but when the fame spread of his having here received the impress of the stigmata, a special interest attached to the site. Pope Alexander IV. took the "Mons Alvernus" under his protection; in 1260 a church was consecrated in the presence of Bonaventura and six bishops; and a few years later the Chapel of the Stigmata

was built through the munificence of Count Simone of Battifolle. The chief church is now a large one; it was begun in 1348, but it was not completed till some time in the fifteenth century, when the whole settlement of La Verna, the "Seraphicus Mons," as it was called, had passed under the protectorate of the Signory of Florence.

The churches at La Verna form part of a vast mass of buildings. We were told that the convent affords accommodation for five hundred friars. As we were about to enter the main church we met some of them walking in a procession, two and two. They had been celebrating service in church, and now they walked down the gallery to conclude it in the chapel, chanting as they went along. We afterwards met them again coming out. There were forty of them, vigorous men for the most part, wearing the rough brown frock and cord, with sandals on their bare feet. It was difficult to tell at a glance from what class they were drawn; certainly not from the higher and more refined. They greatly differed as to age, and the older men had the better appearance. On the whole they were not dignified in bearing, and in person did not look as clean as they might have done.

We spent a long time in church, looking at the altar-piece and reading what the guide-book

to the Casentino of Beni had to say of La Verna. This is the only guide-book to the district as far as I know. It was our constant companion, but we found that it required close and repeated reading, for it is a queer jumble of all kinds of information. We then wandered along the gallery which bridges the abyss between the settlement and the isolated bit of rock on which stands the Chapel of the Stigmata. With its dark panelling and its one large altar-piece this chapel is a true place of rest. Its large della Robbia represents the Crucifixion, with the figures of the Virgin, St John the Baptist, St Jerome and St Francis standing and kneeling below. This association of saints of later date with the characters of Scripture comes at first as a shock to the historical mind; to the Middle Ages it appeared natural. St Anthony of Padua, in a vision, saw the child Christ sitting on his prayer-book. St Bernard, in a vision, saw the Virgin standing before him. When these scenes came to be represented in art they assumed the form of real incidents. And by a further development, St Francis and other holy men and women of the Middle Ages were pictured in contemplation of the Nativity, the Crucifixion and other decisive moments in Biblical history as though they had been present at them in the flesh.

There were other sights to be seen at La

Verna: the rocky chasm where St Francis hurled aside the devil, and the Luoghi Santi, a number of grottoes and rock-hewn chambers where the saint once lived. Visitors from all parts of the world come to La Verna, and on Sundays they say there are crowds of country people all eager for the sights. For myself, I was content with what I had seen and glad to rest in the convent, where an old friar gave us wine and water to drink. He chatted about the convent and about himself. How long had he stayed there—forty years? Yes, quite that. Fifty? Quite likely, it came to much the same thing. I had recently been reading the *Life of St Francis* by Sabatier, a charming writer, who makes the joyful side of the saint's nature very real. The old friar remembered his stay at La Verna, but he would not say much about him.

Then we sat outside under the huge beeches, as yet bare of foliage, listening to the birds, which seemed as numerous and as tuneful as they were seven hundred years ago. With the sun shining brilliantly we started homewards to Bibbiena. The ascent of the Penna, and a walk over to Chiusi, which lay below in a streak of blue mist, are expeditions I should wish to make if I ever again visit the district.

## IV

### *Camaldoli and St Romuald*

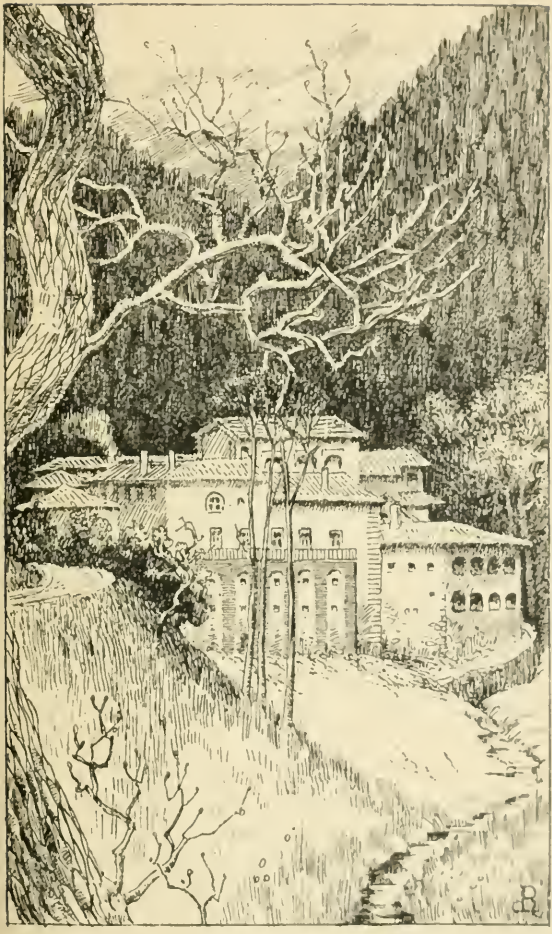
"Qui è Romualdo
Qui son' li frati miei che dentro il chiostro
Fermar li piedi e tennero il cuor saldo."
(*Par.* 22, 49 ff.)

A DAY's walking and we were removed to a very different atmosphere, and to associations widely separated from those connected with the high retreat of La Verna. A wide gulf divides the temper of a man like St Francis from that of a St Romuald. Both are accepted saints of the Church, but while the one taught men how to be guided by love through the example of his own gentleness and forbearance, the other emphatically denounced those who interpreted the religious life differently from himself. St Francis is the gentle soul of the thirteenth century, that yields that it may conquer; St Romuald is the rough-and-ready champion of the tenth century, ever ready to start up in defence of Mother Church.

Camaldoli is a pearl among the many pearls of the Casentino. I have seen it in spring-time only; the Italians tell you that it is even more beautiful in summer, when its shady chestnut

groves and dark pine forest give a sense of restored energy and renewed vigour to those who come here from the arid plains of Tuscany and the blinding heat of the streets of Florence. Camaldoli may be conveniently reached by a good driving road or by paths from the east or the west. We decided on striking into the former of these two paths, and on a genial day we bid adieu to Bibbiena, descending first and then mounting with the driving road which afterwards followed an even ridge for several miles.

The views from this ridge were extensive and varied. In the distance the panorama of the hills was slowly unfolding. Nearer at hand our attention was caught now by a peach-tree with its purple blossoms, then by a cherry-tree, its downy white branches swaying with the breeze. We passed several country-houses, always somewhat removed from the road and always flanked by a group of dark cypresses, which sometimes extended into an avenue down the slope of the hill. These old country-houses of Tuscany consist of a dwelling-house and a farm, which sometimes stand a little way apart, the dwelling-house marked by a look of greater trimness and reserve; sometimes they are brought closer together with an increased look of orderliness to the one and of homeliness to the other. Both houses are built of stone,



CAMALDOLI (CASENTINO)

usually two storeys high. And both are covered with red rough-tiled roofs that lie flat and broad over the entire dwelling and project on all sides into wide eaves.

We passed through Camprena, a *posto* which also had its peculiarity. The houses neither fronted the street nor stood at right angles to it, a want of arrangement not accounted for by any apparent irregularity of the ground. Such an Italian village has none of the neat clustering of its English or German namesake. There is no village church standing aloof to watch over the entrance and exit from life of suffering humanity; no village green with ancient oak suggesting a living protection to rights and liberties; no well-appointed inn betokening the love of an evening's good cheer. The houses have come together anyhow, and few are the attempts made to brighten a portico or a window with a row of flower-pots. Sometimes the house itself is washed over with pink or yellow, but there is never a scrap of flower-garden to add a bright spot of colour to its surroundings.

Further along the road lay Soci, a place which went through stormy experiences in the early Middle Ages. Remains of its own castle walls and remains of the castles of Gressa and Marciano, which frown from heights above and beyond it, recall the times when might made

havoc with right. At one time the Prince Bishop of Arezzo owned the place and made it over to the monks of Camaldoli. . But, apparently on account of its insecurity, they parted with it to one of the Counts Guidi in exchange for rights of ownership at Bagno on the further side of the Apennines. However, the Guidi did not long remain in possession of the castle; they lost it to their enemies, the Tarlati of Pietramala.

Soci is now a growing centre of industry, and boasts of several factories. The high chimney of one of these figures is the attractive feature on the local picture post card. The thought often arises in these days at what a terrible cost to itself mankind is securing greater cheapness in goods—raising the standard of comfort, as economists put it; the thought was brought home in this outlying district. For the men and women we met in other parts of the district were robust in health and decently, if poorly, clad; the children were chubby, well-fed and full of buoyancy. But in places like Soci a blight seemed to have fallen on mankind. Men and women, girls and boys, all had the same look of mixed listlessness and craving, and the children were pale and neglected. No doubt here, as elsewhere, the people who flocked to the factories were impatient of the restraints and the penury of home; they escaped from the toil

of home, but they did so at the cost of the home's regularity of habit. Stranded in a strange place, bound by no responsibilities but those they chose to recognise, these men and women soon fell into irregular ways and formed illicit connections, with a consequent loss of physique to themselves and a deterioration of the race in a couple of generations.

Beyond Soci the mountains began to draw closer together. The road followed the river Archiano, which flowed in a narrower bed and assumed the character of a torrent. Only the land that was near the river was brought under cultivation. The slopes above were covered with a thin scrub of stunted oaks bearing only the sere foliage of last year's growth. These mountains were chiefly of a brown mud-rock that had crumbled away along the water-courses, or else, undermined by them, had fallen in masses of soft earth, forming the gentler slopes. Side-valleys opened and closed as we passed onwards. The characteristics of the plain were disappearing more and more. We were entering the region of the Apennines.

At one point of the road we were doubtful if we should leave the valley, and seeing a man under a hay-stack munching bread and cheese we consulted him. But his look was interested, and he was so positive that the diverging path not being ours, we should never reach Camaldoli

unless we consented to his guidance, that we became equally positive the map should be our only guide. We cut short further parleying by saying that we could but return if we missed the way altogether. Of this there was no chance. A short distance further and we sighted Serravalle, towering high on a steep eminence that fronted all quarters. On one side it commanded the bend in the road that led onwards across the Apennines into Romagna; on the other it stood well above a dip in the hills, and overlooked the side-valley down which the Fosso of Camaldoli flowed to join the Archiano. The mountain streams throughout the Casentino are spoken of as *fossi*, though not generally so designated on the map—a peculiar use of the word which suggests affinity to the northern *fos* rather than to the Latin *fossa*. In sight of Serravalle we sat for a while and feasted on our usual lunch of bread, eggs and wine. After that we followed the stream for a time, and then, parting company with it, we began the ascent up the steep winding slope.

On a clear day such as this, the steeper the ascent the more striking the observation how the nearer mountains sink into insignificance before the higher ranges that rise on the skyline beyond. Under the dome of blue, with its few sailing clouds, the air was of absolute transparency, and every detail of the level we

had left, every detail of the level to which we were attaining, stood out in shining clearness. Each special portion of the world above, below, around had its distinguishing feature, from the flock of sheep grazing by the stream below to the man carrying stakes up the opposite slope, and to the dark birds hanging over Serravalle. But the observing faculty soon wearied with watching for new impressions. With the brighter sunshine, the keener air and the more fragrant vegetation of the height, a dreamy consciousness took possession of the mind—a consciousness of being nearer heaven—heaven, a fictitious limitation of space indeed, but a limitation the thought of which brought one's own concerns into an amended relation to those of the world generally. After all, it is by drawing imaginary circles that the mind attains to a conception of relative size. The greater the height, the wider the outlook; the stronger the consciousness of the world we possess not, the clearer the conception of that part of the world which we have made our own.

Higher up patches of snow lay here and there on the shady side of the path. The shrubs and plants became stunted and nipped, with the exception of the flowering giant spurge that stood up from the stony ground vigorous and brilliantly decorative. We passed a cluster of dwellings,

built of rock and founded on rock, grey and weather-worn, quite Alpine in character, where the necessities of life are wrung from nature in a close hand-to-hand fight. For a long time our path was rocky and uneven and lay between thorny undergrowth. Then it led down at a gentle gradient and drew nearer to the bed of the Fosso. Within a few minutes' walk the character of the surroundings entirely changed. From a stony wilderness we had passed into an enchanted grove. The slopes lost their steepness, and the ground lost its bareness. We walked under high chestnuts along a moss-grown path that was soft to the tread, and then over a carpet of verdure bright with spring flowers, which recalled the emerald meadow dotted with shining flowers over which angels lead mortals to heaven in the painting of Fra Angelico. It was late in the afternoon, and the slanting sun-rays made golden lights on the trunks of the trees and set aglow the patches of primroses. The call of the cuckoo sounded at intervals, and there was the distant warbling of many woodland birds. One wished for the path to lengthen out indefinitely ; all too soon the massive settlement of Camaldoli, set against a forest of pines, closed in the head of the valley.

There is a graceful legend concerning a monk (I forget his name) who was one day tempted to stray from the path of life ; he was sore perplexed

in his mind by the words of the Psalmist, "A thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday." How could time, that uniform flow "unaffected by the speed or the motion of material things," be robbed of the conception of its length? How could time ever cease to exist to one who was endowed with consciousness?

To the monk, as to many another, failing to see was failing to believe. With a heavy heart he wandered forth into the convent garden carrying his problem with him. *Quod erat demonstrandum:* would a greater intercede in his behalf? Time slipped by unawares. It was late at night when he regained the convent gate, but those who opened in answer to his call knew him not. His talk, his appearance, his manner were strange to them, and yet there was that in him which commanded attention—he was like as well as unlike. They admitted him, and after a while the memory of an old, old story came to one of the monks who listened to him—how long ago a member of the fraternity had been troubled in his mind and had wandered forth and never returned, but it had always been believed by some that he was still among the living. After much seeking his name was found in an old convent register. It was the name of the monk who had returned after a thousand years. Then they saw him as one of

themselves. The miracle was accomplished. And the monk understood that eternities which are the products of human conception hold good for man only. God's eternities may be different. It is said that a short time afterwards he passed away from life in peace.

And would it be very different if that monk had been one of the companions of St Romuald here at Camaldoli, nay not quite a thousand, just nine hundred years ago? If he came back now would he know these surroundings for those he had left? Would he feel it the same world as it was then, ruled by the same ideas—that a simple life is conducive to elevation of mind, and that the air of the heights and the pure water of undefiled springs make the body strong to withstand evil? And would they too know him as one of themselves, those venerable monks, bent with age and dignified in bearing, who were approaching the monastery along the upper road as we neared it along the lower? Their woollen robes of many folds were white, such as Romuald in his dream beheld his companions wearing, when, like Jacob, he saw a ladder set up on the earth and reaching up to heaven, and his monks were the angels ascending and descending on it. These men had drawn their hoods over their heads, and over them they wore large, wide-brimmed Tuscan straw hats. They were neatly stockinged and shoed, and most of them

had flowing beards and a complexion that reminded one of the delicate tints of crumpled rose-leaves. To us they were figures of a distant past, and it was wonderful to think that if one of the old monks of Romuald's time were to come among them, the great difference in them would be the first thing to strike him.

The monastic settlement of Camaldoli consisted of a monastery placed near a famous spring, Fonte Buona, and of a hermitage, the Eremo, which was situated further up among the mountains. One of the reasons of Romuald's success lay in his refounding hermit life on a new basis—it is one mark of a genius to turn existing tendencies to new and profitable account. In the monastery all were made welcome ; to the hermitage those were promoted whose temper proved their fitness for a solitary life. At the present time only a small wing of the monastery was inhabited by the monks, who rented it from the Government, the vast conglomerate of buildings having been turned into a hotel. But the hermitage up among the mountains was still entirely occupied by them. Up there lived those who were able to endure the privations of hermit life ; up there they remained till, weakened by old age, they came down to the monastery to be tended in sickness, and after death their mortal remains were carried back

to the Eremo to be buried in the ancient burial-ground.

The account of the life of St Romuald, which was written by St Peter Damian, who belonged to the following generation, gives curious glimpses of the attitude of men's minds in a far-distant past. It is never easy to transport one's self to the moral and ethical standard of another age, for the actions of the men who then stirred up the emotions and aroused enthusiasm can be very differently interpreted; in one aspect they are heroes, in another they are faddists. It is in this respect with Romuald as with the holy man of another age, Diogenes the Cynic. Looked at from one point of view, the courage with which Diogenes acted up to his convictions, the cheerfulness with which he bore the hardships of slavery, and the simplicity of life which he affected, bear the stamp of grandeur. Looked at from another side, he is a man of oddities and eccentricities. Prompted in a like direction, Romuald launched forth against misdeeds, discarded every comfort, and commanded respect from the most powerful. But his behaviour also appears absurd if we fix our minds on the way he courted dirt, weakened himself by fasting, and wore himself out by imaginary conflicts with the devil. And there are other points of similarity between the cynic of classical antiquity

and the saint of early Christianity. The cynic called himself a citizen of the world, and the word cosmopolitan is held to be his invention ; while the saint exaggerated the power of his efforts so vastly that "he looked forward to the time when the whole world would be transformed into a hermitage, and the mass of the nations united in one monastic order." Both men were praised for their undisturbed serenity under tribulation, and both in unabated vigour reached the extreme limits of old age.

Let us look more closely into the account of Romuald's life, an account written by a great man and telling of a great man is surely worth analysis. Romuald was a native of Ravenna, and was born early in the tenth century of a noble family. As a youth he was witness how his father killed a relative ; and he went to St Apollinare in Classe, to expiate the crime by forty days' penance. The church of St Apollinare is little changed from what it was then, and visitors to Ravenna will recall with delight the simple proportions of the roomy basilica, and its brilliant mosaics, with St Apollinare preaching with his flock of sheep around him. A monk of the church proposed that Romuald should join the fraternity, and the young man agreed to do so, after spending a night in church, when St Apollinare himself appeared as the monk had foretold—a proof, as Romuald declared and as Peter Damian believed,

that the saint really lay buried here. But Romuald's innate spirit of restlessness and want of consideration for the shortcomings of others cut short his stay after three years' noviciate. The monks would lie in bed when it was time to be in church singing, and Romuald, finding the church closed, sang in the dormitory. The monks decided to rid themselves of the inconvenient enthusiast by throwing him out of the window. Romuald, however, escaped to the woods, and there he found a companion to his heart's desire in the unlearned but ardent Marinus. This holy hermit chanted through the entire psalter every day ; he would repeat twenty verses under one tree, twenty under the next, and so on till his task was accomplished. Romuald joined him in his exercises, and mistakes in his performance were punished by a blow on the ear from the hermit's staff. When his hearing became impaired in consequence, he turned his other ear for castigation, and his stern master was touched. On three days of the week the two hermits lived on a bit of bread and a handful of beans ; on the other four, crushed corn, *pulmentum*, constituted their food. Their conduct was evidently considered unexceptionable, and in 978 when, in consequence of an insurrection in Venice, Count Petro Orseolo, who had headed it, was advised to seek refuge in a convent, Romuald and Marinus were among those chosen to escort him

to a monastery near Perpignan in the south of France. There they resumed the old life, and were credited with great holiness. Romuald's fame increased owing to incidents such as this. A lord of the neighbourhood, *impeto barbarico*, stole a cow from a peasant. The peasant begged Romuald to ask for the cow, but the lord laughed his request to scorn ; the cow was roasted for the feast. However, the holy man's interference was not wasted. When the lord came to eat of the cow, a bit of meat stuck in his throat and he died a wretched death. No wonder that the people of the neighbourhood, when they heard that Romuald was about to leave for Italy, as they could not retain him, decided to kill him so as at least to secure his corpse. It was a time when relics, especially on the further side of the Alps, commanded a high price in the market. Kings and emperors gave gold and jewels in exchange for them, ecclesiastics of the higher grades did not hesitate from stealing where they could not procure them otherwise. And the relics did not lose by being transferred ; on the contrary, their wonder-working properties if anything increased. Romuald, however, was apprised of the country folk's intention, and knew how to meet it. He rapidly shaved his head, and when they came, intending to kill him, they found him eating immoderately. This was contrary to all accepted ideas of

saintliness; they thought he had gone mad and went away. The holy man was left to depart in peace for Italy, where he found a new work awaiting him. His father was about to leave the convent he had entered. This had to be prevented. Romuald fastened his father's feet in stocks, loaded him with chains and whipped him till the old man's senses returned. Romuald's career as a reformer now began, but, as his biographer says, "the zeal was so great that glowed in this man's breast that he was never satisfied with what he had accomplished, and ever turned to new undertakings."

Thus we find him at one time dwelling in a solitary cell in the marshes, where, like St Guthlac in the fens of Lincolnshire, he was endlessly worried through the lawless agency of bad spirits. After that, thanks to the protection of Ugo, margrave of Tuscany, he collected about him a number of monks at Bagno, in Romagna. But he so incensed them by sending money to the relief of a distant monastery which had been consumed by fire that he had to flee before their rage. Some years later, Romuald became for a time abbot at St Apollinare in Classe, where he had stayed in his youth. The Emperor Otto III., when he crossed the Alps in 996, heard that this monastery was going to ruin, and he persuaded Romuald to reform the

monks. The influence which Romuald exerted on the melancholy young emperor is full of interesting particulars. Otto went a pilgrimage on foot from Monte Gargano to Rome, and he spent some time with the hermit Nilus, who was working for the reform of religious life in southern Italy along lines similar to those Romuald was following in the north. Finally, Otto spent forty days as a penitent in the convent at Ravenna, and was almost persuaded by Romuald to become a monk. Romuald's stay as abbot at Classe was not, however, of long duration. He soon came and laid his crozier at the emperor's feet ; an abbot's life was not what he desired. His zeal had taken another direction. He was fired by the thought of restoring hermit life on the model of what had existed in Egypt, and he travelled about from place to place collecting together wandering monks, the *gyrovagi*, whom St Benedict had denounced as evil. He arranged that they should dwell together, and join in the observance of certain rules.

This restoration of monastic life was part of a wider scheme. Reference has been made to the growth of simony, both among laymen and ecclesiastics. The evil had assumed such proportions towards the close of the tenth century that the prestige of the Church was seriously jeopardised. It was a critical epoch, and all

depended on exposing the cause of the evil and on stirring men's consciences with regard to it. Romuald came forward and openly declared that simony was the most damnable heresy, and that no one who had entered the Church for money could hope for salvation unless he gave up his benefice and became a layman. Peter Damian was of opinion that, while no one acted directly in compliance with this request, the stir which Romuald made was great. More than once he was in danger of his life, and the experiences through which he went are full of interesting particulars. At one time he lived for seven years as a hermit, and came back, his body shrivelled, weather-stained and of the colour of a newt. But his cutting himself off from the society of his fellows apparently led to many conversions. At another time he was fired by the wish to take a part in evangelising Hungary. Among the monks he had come across was a son of the Prince of Hungary. But it was not to be. When Romuald and his companions had gone some way on their journey, sickness overtook them, and sickness returned to the party whenever it attempted to proceed. There was nothing left to do but give up the undertaking and return to Italy.

Romuald's fame was at its height when the Emperor Heinrich II. crossed the Alps in 1022. So much was he moved by Romuald

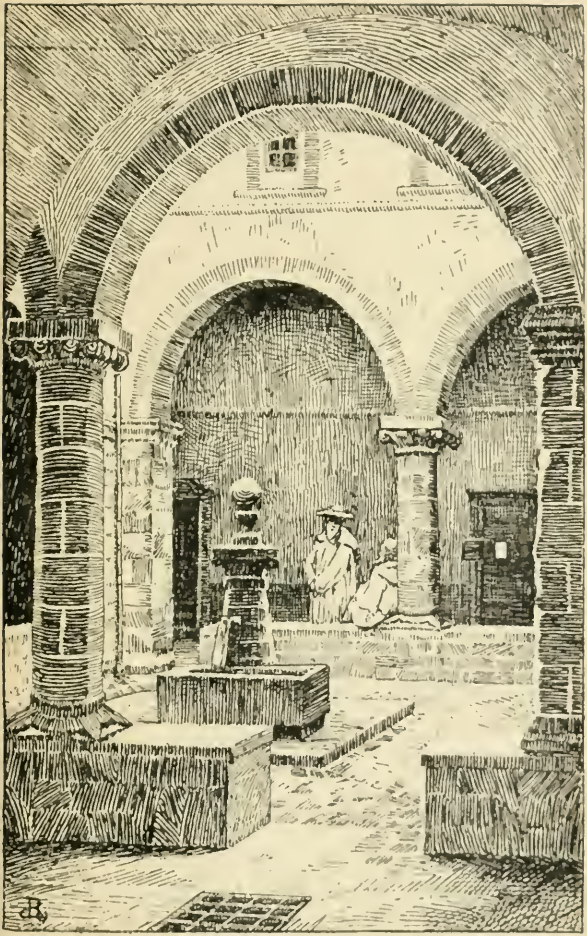
that he expressed the wish that his soul were in the saint's body. Romuald's appearance at the time was peculiar. Hoary, unkempt and unwashed, he came to court wearing a dirty, shaggy skin. The Germans crowded round in the hope of snatching a few hairs from it, which they wished to preserve as relics.

Romuald first came to Camaldoli about the year 1018. It has been affirmed and denied that the site of the monastery was a gift to him from a certain Count Maldolo, and that the name Camaldoli represents the words *Casa Malduli*. The saint never stayed here long, and he died away from here in his hermit's cell at Val de Castro in 1027. But the routine of life at Camaldoli was held to represent his aspirations, and Camaldoli gave its name to all the monasteries which Romuald had founded. These were never numerous. The order did not spread much beyond Italy and the south of France. But within these limits it exerted considerable influence.

And thus attended by thoughts of the enthusiast who laid the foundations of this vast establishment so many hundreds of years ago, we entered the building by a long arched stone passage, which led up from the garden without to the courtyard within. This courtyard is said to date from the tenth century; I have rarely seen one more impressive through the stern

simplicity and perfect balance of its proportions. It is built throughout of the same grey stone, and there is little attempt at ornamentation. Pillars with slightly swelled shafts and simple capitals support round arches which extend round the four sides of a paved court. In the centre of this court stands a fountain with an unceasing flow of water. Passages, staircases and narrow corridors lead off in different directions. Surely there could be nothing more suited to the solitary side of one's nature than to sit on one of the huge logs of wood that lay on one side of the court, listening to the flow of the water and watching the clouds that floated across the opening above. Now and again there was the sound of voices and of footsteps coming and going in the far distance. A man carried faggots across the court, a woman came to wash lettuces at the fountain—living figures that moved in the round of duty and seemed to emphasise the old-world solitude of the place. There is no greater solitude than an open-air solitude from which the life of nature is excluded. And within these walls there was no sign of animal or vegetable life—nothing to remind one of the stirring of the sap or the beating of a pulse, except that of which one was conscious of in one's self.

That night we had the vast hotel of Camaldoli to ourselves. In the springtime there are few visitors. We ate and slept in some rooms off the



COURTYARD OF CAMALDOLI

ancient courtyard. We wandered into the roomy church. One of the old monks had died that afternoon, and prayers were being offered for his salvation. We met the bier as it was carried out from the church.

Like other monasteries, Camaldoli has experienced many vicissitudes in times of war and in times of peace. Throughout the Middle Ages it remained a famous goal for pilgrimages, and its woodland air and mountain freshness made it a favourite health resort. The converts to the order were at first devoted to outdoor pursuits—the hermits in their little gardens tended plants that were used for making drugs, and the monks were devoted to the culture of the forests. Later, they contracted a taste for learning, and a famous library was collected, chiefly by Ambrogio Traversari, who took an important place in the early Italian Renaissance. Of this intellectual life no trace remains. The books were scattered at the beginning of this century. Some are at Poppi, others are at Florence, and the love of letters is dead. But with the older achievements time has dealt more sparingly. A pharmacy still makes part of the settlement, and the surrounding forest retains the fame of being one of the finest in Europe. When the Government appropriated Camaldoli, the traditions of the monks regarding the cultivation of the trees were carried on, and Vallombrosa, the

monastery on the further side of the Pratomagno, was turned into a school of forestry. All the forests throughout the district were placed under its care, and thus the great fir trees, the *abete* of Camaldoli, its chestnut groves, and its beech and oak forests have preserved some of their old grandeur.

LANDMARK OF CAMALDOLI

## V

### *In the Apennines*

. . . "appiè del Casentino
Traversa un' acqua c'ha nome l'Archiano
Che sovra l'Ermo nasce in Appennino."
(*Purg.* 5, 96 ff.)

EARLY on the following morning we left the monastery of Camaldoli for the hermitage. It was a beautiful walk of about three miles, along a steep, paved path through the ancient pine forest. The air was cold but the sun was bright, and the trees emitted a strong resinous fragrance. I have never walked under trees more stalwart in stature, the stem of each straight, smooth and rounded as a shaft, with branches loaded with hanging verdure jutting out in grander sweeps.

At one point of the road three large wooden crosses marked the limit which the hermits formerly from their side were not allowed to cross; from this side no woman was allowed to penetrate beyond them. But the story goes that a princess of the house of Medici, dressed in man's clothing, once braved the restriction. She visited the hermitage, with no further consequences, however, but that, having satisfied

her curiosity, she went and confessed to the Pope, and he bid her give money to build an additional cell in expiation of her crime, which, to this day, is designated by the armorial balls, the *palle*, of the Medici family.

The paved path mostly followed the course of the Fosso of Camaldoli which rises above the Eremo. Dante apparently looked upon this stream not as a tributary of the Archiano, but as the Archiano itself, for he lets Buonconte in Purgatory speak of the Archiano as "taking its rise above the hermitage." The river came down between moss-grown rocks, carrying with it a stream of mountain fragrance, and the path which followed it ended on a wide grass-grown space, at one end of which stood the hermitage. And up here, in the midst of the forest, at an elevation of 3700 feet above sea level, and in a climate which these thin-skinned southerners talked of as cold and rough in the extreme, stood the twenty-four little stone cells of the hermitage, each inside the walled enclosure of its garden. Here in the depth of mountain solitude, cut off from intercourse with the world, and restricted in their intercourse with each other, the hermits of Camaldoli lived the same life of seclusion and solitude which St Romuald considered the surest way of attaining to happiness and heaven. Here they lived, dwelling alone, eating alone and working alone, with the

conceptions of time and space obliterated as far as disregard of the ordinary interests of life will obliterate them, with no hope or expectation of change, a life in which time can mend and mar nothing.

We were told that all the cells were tenanted except the original cell of St Romuald, which is always kept standing empty. All the cells are constructed on the same plan. Each consists of a small house divided into two rooms opening out of each other, with an additional recess in which stands the bed. The windows and the door open on a small garden, which is surrounded by walls so as to close in the view. Each hermit attends to his own garden, in which he grows herbs and vegetables. The cooking for the whole settlement is done in an outhouse, and the food is brought round and handed in to each of the cells. Seven times in the twenty-four hours the hermits wander forth and assemble in church to pray together; otherwise they are alone.

We were shown over the church by a white-robed monk, who readily talked of the smaller interests of life—of the severity of the winter, the daily routine, and the relics and pictures of the different chapels. But he did not respond when I expressed regret at the severance of intercourse between the different existing settlements of the Order of Camaldoli, a severance

which is inevitably leading to the collapse of the whole organisation. It may be part of these men's attitude of mind, or it may be a self-imposed limitation, that any allusion to change is met by cheerful and unquestioning acceptance of things as they are. Is it that the future of their order has become a matter of indifference to them, or is it that a tacit agreement among them prevents them from discussing their own affairs with outsiders? The monk also showed us over the cell of St Romuald, which is unchanged, they say, except that the piety of a later age has covered the inside of its rough walls with panelling. On occasions this cell has been offered to distinguished visitors. It was so offered to St Francis, but he felt the honour too great to accept.

Many visitors in the course of centuries have visited this hermitage. Popes, emperors, men of piety and men of learning have prayed in its chapel. And up here in the shade of these huge pines those conversations took place which the learned Cristofero Landini has described, when some of the ablest scholars of the Early Italian Renaissance stayed here together in the summer of 1468, and whiled away several days in learned philosophical discussion.

The *Conversations of Camaldoli* are remarkable chiefly for their learned interest, but their setting is attractive, as they enable us to

realise the friendly relations of some of the most distinguished men of the Medicean circle—men to whom the revival of learning and modern scholarship owes a debt of gratitude. For these conversations take us back to the time when the Republic of Florence, following the example of the Republic of Venice, had become the home of several learned Greeks. The spirit of a new era was stirring in every department of human knowledge, and those who studied the works of Plato and of his expositors at first hand and with some thoroughness, showed a renewed interest in Virgil and Horace, Dante and Petrarch. The Greek writers were translated into Latin, and many of them in a Latin garb first saw the daylight of print. But the works of Latin and Italian authors likewise engrossed attention, and Italian itself once more was looked upon as a language capable of expressing the great thoughts of great men.

Among those who, according to Landini, met together at Camaldoli on a summer day of 1468, were several whose life-work was bound up in revising, editing and translating the great works of antiquity. The first to arrive were the two young Medici, Lorenzo, afterwards surnamed the Magnificent, and his brother Giuliano, who was afterwards stabbed in the rising organised by the Pazzi. They were accompanied by Alemanno Rinuccini,

who is known for his translation of some of Plutarch's Lives; by Donato Acciajuoli, the author of a commentary on Aristotle; by Donato's brother Piero; by Marco Parenti, and by Antonio Canegiano, "most learned men," Landini calls them, "who had studied eloquence for years and who had gained proficiency in philosophical discussion by means of arduous study." They were resting at the hermitage when Landini describes himself as arriving. He brought his brother with him. Landini is chiefly remembered among us for his commentary on Dante, but he also wrote commentaries on Horace and Virgil. He taught Latin at the newly-founded Academy of Florence, and in later days he became Chancellor of the Republic.

The party had barely exchanged greetings when the news was brought that two other friends had arrived at the monastery, where they were leaving their horses to come up to the Eremo on foot, led by the prior Mariotto. The order of Camaldoli had recently lost a shining light in its general, Ambrogio Traversari, known as *il famoso Greco*, who not only read Greek but spoke it with fluency. Mariotto was his pupil. The men he was conducting were Leone Battista Alberti, and Marsilio Ficino—men as different as possible in appearance and bearing, but who stand as

representative figures of the Italian Renaissance, each in a special direction.

Whoever came into contact with Leone Battista felt that the gods had bestowed on him the fulness of their gifts, for he set the mark of originality on whatever he handled. His many-sidedness in after days was only excelled by that of Lionardo da Vinci. As a mere youth, Leon Battista wrote a comedy which passed for a re-discovered classic ; and he is the author of the first treatises on painting, sculpture and architecture that can lay claim to a scientific basis. He worked as an architect, and the front of Santa Maria Novella at Florence was his design. He was a famous talker, a man of clever sayings, and eloquent in praise of beauty wherever he found it—in art, in nature and in man. From youth upwards he was renowned for his agility, and increasing years dealt kindly with his good looks. At the time of his coming to Camaldoli he was in the sixties.

Marsilio Ficino, whom he is here described as having met on his way from Rome, was the greatest Hellenist of his age and the keenest intellect among the older Florentine humanists. Small, frail and visionary, he combined in himself the qualities that distinguish and endear the typical scholar — patience, sagacity, preciseness, extreme modesty and a high tone of mental elevation. His fame

rests on his translation into Latin of the works of Plato, and he was the colleague of Landini at the Florentine Academy, where he taught Greek. In the large fresco of Domenico Ghirlandajo in Santa Maria Novella at Florence, Marsilio Ficino and Landini are both represented among the painter's distinguished contemporaries.

Such were the men who met together at the hermitage of Camaldoli, upwards of four hundred years ago, rejoicing in the thought of spending a few days together. On the first day they rested. On the next they attended mass, and then they sallied forth into the forest, and there, under a spreading beech, they sat down and Leone Battista opened the discussion. Starting from the fact that the responsibilities of public life were about to devolve on the two young Medici owing to the ill-health of their father, he spoke of the duties of a citizen, and passed on to compare the respective merits of a life of activity and of a life of contemplation. This was a favourite subject of discussion at the time, and Leone Battista ended by pronouncing in favour of contemplation, a view which was in accordance with Plato's ideality and with the Christian exaltation of Mary above Martha. On the following day the same subject was discussed in the same company, and on the days after they spoke of the greatest good and of

the true aim of human existence. No doubt these *Conversations* are largely of Landini's making, but they were much appreciated by his contemporaries, and Marsilio Ficino is known to have admired them greatly. They were often reprinted at that period; now they have fallen into oblivion, and only the student now and again disturbs the dust which accumulates round them on the bookshelf.

On leaving the hermitage we had intended ascending to the *Prato al Soglio*, from where there is a splendid view, and from there crossing the mountains by a path which led to Badia a Prataglia. But owing to the snow that lay behind the Eremo this was impossible, and we found ourselves instead on a grassy road skirting the mountain always at about the same level. From one point of this road we looked down on the huge monastery of Camaldoli; further along and the outlook was over apparently limitless masses of pine forest; further again and the slopes below us were clothed with beeches, their leafless branches just touched by the first tinge of red. Finally we were out again on the bare mountain, with the panorama of the Apennines about us, and Serravalle with its tower hanging far below in the blue mist like a bird. The road now became a rough path over uneven, mountainous ground, such as we had crossed on the previous day, but we were at a higher eleva-

tion, and the surroundings of sky and scenery were proportionately grander.

I have often thought that the sky of different mountainous regions is different, just as the sea along different lines of the coast varies. Whether we have seen the Mediterranean in sunny weather or in rough, we carry away with us the impression of its restless readiness to run to froth be it counter to a breeze or against a jutting headland. Similarly the North Sea stays with us in its glassy reluctance to break, and the Atlantic in the mighty inherent roll of its waves. As great a difference in character belongs to the sky of different mountainous regions, though it is less easily fixed in word and thought. To me heaviness and sullenness seemed to characterise the sky of the Apennines ; once it sank into the mountains, there it stayed. The obvious reason was the poor clothing of the soil and the want of running water ; there were none of those surface currents which carry down and dissolve the mists of thick weather elsewhere. For once outside the forest region of Camaldoli, there was a marked want of trees and a marked want of water. The denudation of the soil is something terrible, and already in April many streams were running dry.

The path we followed had many beautiful outlooks, but there was a good deal of snow, and we had come far out of our way. We were

glad at last to catch sight of the white line of the driving road into Romagna winding in and out among the mountains below, for the days in April are short. In this case a shower of rain caused us to put on additional speed ; we were down in the road before dark, and soon afterwards established in comfortable quarters at the Casa Rossi. This is no inn, in the ordinary sense of the word—the family let the upper part of their house in summer—but they took us in for a couple of nights and made us welcome.

Badia a Prataglia lies at about an hour's distance below the pass of the driving road from the Casentino into Romagna. The place boasted of one of the oldest abbacies in the Apennines, which dated its foundation further back than St Romuald and Camaldoli. But in course of time the abbacy of Prataglia lost its standing, while that of the monastery of Camaldoli increased, with the result that the older abbey became a dependency of the newer monastery. At present nothing remains of the old settlement but the convent church. But Prataglia itself is a growing place. Its numerous houses lie scattered in groups up and down the valley, and there are several new villa residences belonging to families who come up from Romagna and Tuscany to escape the heat of the summer. A *pension* situated some distance

above the place on the hills is fast becoming a favourite summer resort.

The Rossi at whose house we stayed are the originators and the owners of a home industry which has considerably raised the standard of comfort throughout the district. The firm exports simple wooden furniture, the different parts of which are cut and carved to certain patterns in the various homes and fitted together on the premises. That evening being Saturday, men were coming to the house bringing their week's work, in exchange for which they carried away payment in money or payment in kind from the store kept by the Rossi. We were shown examples of the articles manufactured—chairs, stools, cradles and such like, all of the simplest shape. Among other things, we were shown a spinning-wheel, but we were told that the attempt to introduce it has failed. The Italian women prefer spinning from the distaff, and it seems obvious that they will continue to do so till the use of machines supersedes hand-labour.

Rain, wind, hail, a thunderstorm and a snow-storm, we experienced them all in the one day which we spent exploring the heights of the neighbouring pass. But with a good road within reach and food awaiting one under cover, battling with the elements for a time adds to one's enjoyment. Then the reflection came

that the snow prevented progress along the mountain paths, and we determined to return into the valley. We left Prataglia white in its wintry garb, and in the short space of an afternoon we passed from the nipping blasts of winter into the bright geniality of spring. Below Serravalle the falling snowflakes changed into driving mists. As the mountains receded, the valley of the Arno lay before us, its vineyards and cornfields brown and golden in the light of the afternoon sun. We were bound for Poppi, which lies at about an hour's distance up the valley from Bibbiena—"Poppi, the capital of the Casentino," as Vasari called it.

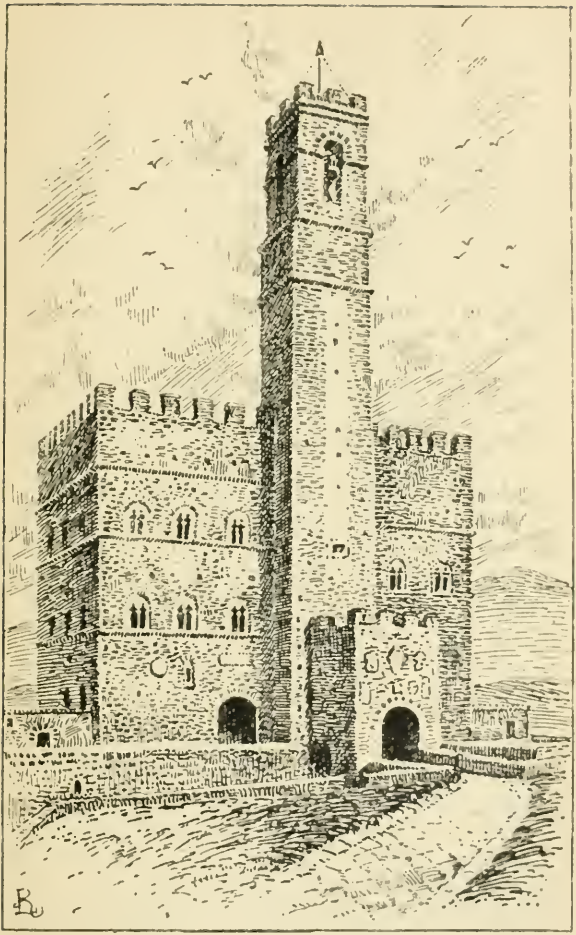
## VI

### *Poppi and Counts Guidi*

"Pupium agri Clusentini caput."
(*Vasari.*)

Poppi lies on a steep hill which rises abruptly from the valley of the Arno, forming a vantage ground, as it were, in regard to the upper part of the Casentino. The castle, its most notable feature, occupies the highest part of this hill looking south. This is the ancient stronghold, as it was rebuilt in the thirteenth century, curiously like the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, but more commanding in appearance owing to the height on which it stands.

Poppi already in the tenth century was a centre of influence of the Guidi, one of the most powerful families of Tuscany during the Middle Ages. The property they owned extended far north and south of the Apennines, and the Casentino bristled with their strongholds. Romena, Porciano, Battifolle, Soci, all recall episodes in their history. With the exception of Poppi, all these castles lie in ruins; their walls stand desolate and their towers are open to wind and rain. Alone at Poppi the palace with



CASTLE OF POPPI

its soaring tower stands unbroken, a lasting monument of the power to which the Guidi attained.

The annals of this family have engrossed the attention of historians partly because the Guidi to some extent influenced the course of Florentine history, partly because Dante repeatedly referred to them in the *Divine Comedy* and was in personal relation to several members of the family. Their history goes back to the ninth century; in the thirteenth the climax of their influence was reached. But in Dante's time the members of the family were still numerous, and in the remoteness of the Casentino their power continued unimpaired.

Poppi nowadays is a town of some importance. A steep, paved path and a driving road in wide zig-zags lead up into the town from Ponte di Poppi, a suburb which has grown up on the Arno at the foot of the hill. The paved path enters the town near the church, which lies on the point of the ridge farthest away from the castle, and from the church one walks up the main street with arcades and shops on either hand. And on either hand, whenever a gap occurs between the houses, or a shop is thrown open and a window appears in its depth, one looks right away across the dip of the hill and the plains below into the green distance of the mountains.

The place is first mentioned in the tenth

century in connection with Count Tegrimo Bevisangue, who, with his wife Gisla, founded the abbey of Strumi in close proximity to the stronghold. The Guidi were of Langobard descent. They were one of the noble families who had come into Italy as part of a barbarian invasion, and who, in the course of time, came to rank among the great feudatories of the Empire. A legendary colouring is given to the opening chapter of their history, but its essentials are corroborated by contemporary references. Count Tegrimo is the first member of the family who figures in the annals of the Casentino. At the time he was the sole surviving member of the family. His father, Count Guido, married Engelrada, the daughter of Duke Martino of Ravenna. This gave him a place of authority at Ravenna. But a dispute arose between him and the archbishop; he caused the archbishop to be imprisoned. There was a popular rising, and Count Guido and all his family were put to death—all excepting Tegrimo, who was saved by his nurse. The name Bevisangue afterwards attached to him either because of the revenge he took on his father's murderers, or else because he had contracted a habit of licking his sword after he had spilt blood.

At the time when Tegrimo founded Strumi —the original site of which is said to be marked by a church which is seen from Poppi lying

in the midst of dark cypresses — the family already owned strongholds near Pistoja and Florence and the stronghold of Modigliana above Faenza, which is identical with the Castrum Mutilum mentioned by Livy. One by one the strongholds with which the counts fortified their possessions, or which they snatched from their neighbours, appear in the annals of the family. Tegrimo's son Guido dated a charter from Porciano, which is situated at the uppermost end of the Casentino, a proof that here also a stronghold on a commanding site was in their possession.

Historians of a later date—Malespini and Villani, the contemporary of Dante—state that the ancestor of the Guidi came into Italy with the Saxon Emperor Otto I. and from him received the castle of Modigliana. Also that Otto IV. on his passage through Florence saw Gualdrada, the daughter of the rich citizen Berti, and that his follower, one of the Guidi, married her and received the Casentino in dower. As the Guidi owned Modigliana before Otto I. came to Italy, and held extensive property in the Casentino long before the days of Gualdrada, these stories in themselves are untrue, but a true estimation of facts underlies them. The Saxon emperors, in order to strengthen their authority over the greater barons of Italy, favoured the lesser, and among them they favoured the Guidi. The

Count Guido who married Gualdrada was on good terms both with Florence and Otto IV.

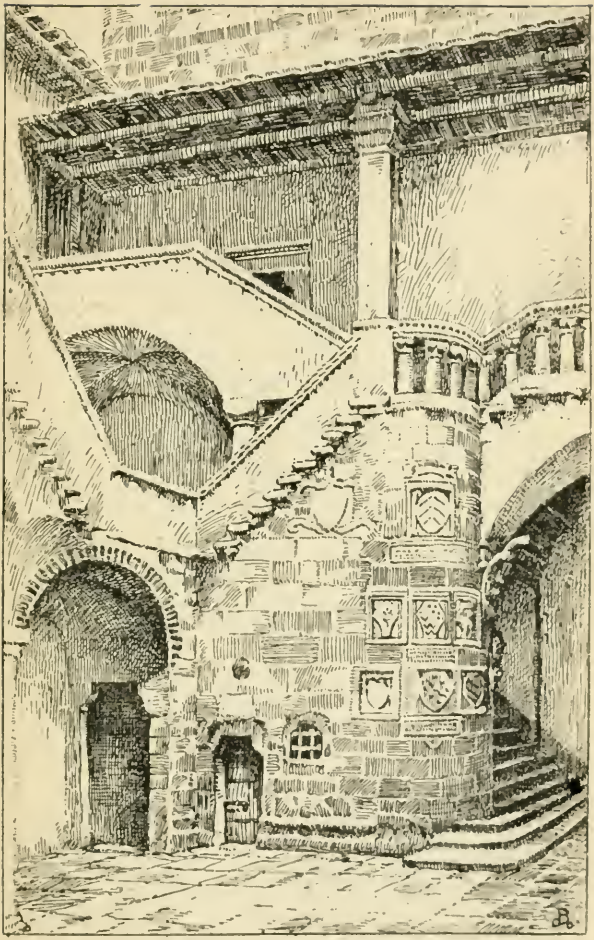
After the time of Bevisangue we find the Guidi steadily increasing in power, fighting against other lords and against rising communes, sometimes on their own account, sometimes in support of the Imperial policy. True representatives of the rural nobility, they were at once turbulent and prosperous, and they made their influence felt in ecclesiastical as well as in other matters. It was owing to protection given him by a lady member of the Guidi family that Giovanni Gualberto became the founder of Vallombrosa, and in three different generations a member of the family was bishop of Pistoja. At the close of the eleventh century a father and a son Guido were in frequent attendance on Countess Matilda, the daughter and heir of the last margrave of Tuscany, whose strenuous opposition to the Imperial policy and support of the claims of Tuscany secured her lasting popularity. Probably to secure the father's interest she adopted the son, to whom the surname *il Marchese* attached in consequence. This Count Guido in his youth joined the first crusade, and was imprisoned by Saladin. Property was mortgaged with the canons of Pistoja to pay for his ransom. After his father's death he bestowed land on the faithful follower who had shared his hardships.

Count Guido *il Marchese* favoured various schemes conducive to his vassals' welfare. He helped to carry out the plan of building the aqueduct by which Pistoja is provided with water from the hills; he became the founder of the city of Empoli; he built a leprosy near Poppi. About the year 1106 the "Great" Countess Matilda gave up the plan of constituting him her heir and bestowed her extensive property on the Church. Matilda enjoyed such popularity throughout Tuscany, that songs in praise of her were long sung in the churches of Florence according to Boccaccio. In the *Divine Comedy* she is described as guardian of the earthly Paradise, in which she led the way to the triumph of the Church. In remembrance of her the name Contessa or Tessa continues frequent to this day. The reader will recall the sweet *contadina* of Romola. In the Casentino Matilda is popularly credited with building a number of churches which are remarkable for the sculpture which adorns them.

One of these churches, that of San Martino di Vado, is about an hour's walk from Poppi up the valley of the Solano; another flanks the hill of Romena; a third is at Stia, and another is at Montemignajo, high up a side valley. The column capitals inside these churches deserve attention for the place they claim in the history of early Tuscan sculpture. Not two of them are alike,

and the way the foliage and figures on them is treated is always quaint and often beautiful. I have sometimes thought what a gain it would be if some of the numerous amateur photographers one meets would combine and systematically go over separate districts, issuing a list of the views taken by them. In the Casentino only a few general views were obtainable, and we in vain sought to procure photographs of interesting remains; I ignore if any have been taken. In this case one longed for photographs of these capitals to compare them with the early sculptures of Pistoja and Arezzo. One of the columns in the church of Romena bore the date 1152—the earliest sculptures at Pistoja are dated 1166—and the erection of the parish church at Arezzo belongs to the same period. As a direct connection existed between these places at the time owing to the rights of overlordship held by the Guidi, it may be owing to their influence that a style of sculpture which has so much of the Langobard spirit came to be introduced into the different parts of Tuscany.

The Count Guido, to whose lifetime the erection of these churches belongs, was the son of Guido *il Marchese*, and was known himself as Guidoguerra. In him the influence of the family reached its climax. The vastness of his possessions was such that Sanzanome, the earliest historian of Florence, spoke of them as con-



COURTYARD OF CASTLE, POPPI (CASENTINO)

stituting a state or province in themselves. Moreover, he was a shining representative of knighthood. His contemporary, the Bishop Otto of Freysing, described him as the most powerful lord of Tuscany, and Tolosanus, the chronicler of Faenza, who knew him, spoke of him as holding the foremost place in honour and courtesy. "All Italy wept at his death and especially Faenza," he tells us, for the city of Faenza had appealed to him for help on account of the encroachments made on its territory by the city of Forli, and had found in him a powerful protector. The acts of Count Guidoguerra argue in favour of his mental horizon being wide. He joined the crusade of 1147, he stood in high esteem with the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and the enterprises he led in Italy were invariably successful. It was only by taking advantage of his temporary absence that the citizens of Florence succeeded in destroying Montedicroce, a most important stronghold of his which had therefore become an object of hatred to Florence.

For the city of Florence, as it increased in importance, was bent on improving the conditions of its trade. Florence is surrounded by hills, and these hills in the twelfth century bristled with the strongholds of nobles, who were ready to swoop down and plunder the trains of passing traders

on the slightest provocation. In the interest of its further development the city was prompted to make war on the surrounding nobility, attacks which went hand-in-hand with a policy that was productive of important and unexpected changes.

The first attempts of the Florentines to subdue their troublesome neighbours belonged to the lifetime of Guido *il Marchese*. Emboldened by success, and encouraged by the inactivity of the margraves, they attacked Fiesole, the ancient Etruscan city which towered high above Florentine territory, for here, as Villani related, the rural nobles, whom he designated as *cattani*, collected and harboured outlaws who did damage to the trade and the territory of Florence. The undertaking proved successful in the campaigns of 1123-1125, and large parts of Fiesole were razed to the ground. Its "destruction" was followed by attacks on Montegrifone, which belonged to the Ormanni, and on Monteboni, which belonged to the Buondelmonti. A special significance attached to the latter event. For the Florentines, intent on securing friendly relations with their neighbours, made it a condition of peace that the nobles they defeated should reside inside Florence during a stated part of the year. The first to agree to the arrangement were the Buondelmonti; they were

followed by a number of others, including the Guidi, who were nothing loth to gain a foothold inside the city. To the older inhabitants of Florence, which included the greater citizens—the *illustri cittadini* of Dante—and the lesser citizens, a third element was now added in the form of the rural nobles, who soon contracted a taste for city life while they remained indifferent to its responsibilities. They came into Florence with crowds of retainers; they built themselves houses which were strongholds to all intents and purposes; they fought out their private feuds inside the city walls, and as soon as occasion offered they turned the balance of the constitution in their favour. And more than this. They brought with them a taste for display and spendour which subverted all accepted standards, and which put an end to the simplicity and soberness of the older Florentines.

In the eye of Dante the influx of these rural nobles was a reason of the city's misfortune. "Ever was the confusion of persons the origin of the city's ills," are the words which he put into the mouth of his ancestor Cacciaguida. Cacciaguida in the *Comedy* compares the state of Florence as it was in Dante's time with what it had been a century and a half before, and he deplores the increased luxuriousness of the Florentines. In those simpler days "Bellincion Berti went about in leathern belt with bone

clasp, and his dame came from the mirror unpainted."

This Bellincion Berti and his wife were the parents of the lady Gualdrada, through whom not the Casentino, as Villani recorded, but the valuable Ravignani property in Florence near the Porta San Piero came into the possession of the Guidi. Gualdrada was the second wife of Count Guido, surnamed il Vecchio, and the epithet *buona* which Dante bestowed on her she doubtless owed to her attempts to soften her husband's fierceness. For Guido Vecchio in the eyes of the chronicler of Faenza was the direct opposite of his father; knightly dignity and pride with him took the form of wilfulness and overbearing.

The incidents which led up to the marriage and its outcome are worth recording. Guido Vecchio began as the loyal supporter of the Imperial cause; he entertained Frederick Barbarossa in his castle at Modigliana, in 1167, and with the Imperial troops he marched on Rome, where Frederick succeeded in establishing the anti-pope. But the desire for municipal freedom was awakening in the smaller cities of Italy, and in order to frustrate the Emperor's influence they began to form alliances among themselves and supported Pope Alexander. A struggle ensued which lasted seventeen years and in which Guido sided with the Emperor,

thereby finding himself repeatedly plunged into war with Florence, and into supporting her rival Siena. When the Emperor and the Pope finally made peace at Venice, the relations between the cities of Tuscany were readjusted. Among the representatives of Florence who arranged the peace between this city and Siena was Bellincion Berti, the father of Gualdrada. In what year Guido married her is unknown, but he divorced his first wife Agnes in order to do so. His attitude towards Florence underwent a complete change in consequence. Henceforth there was friendship between them.

In other respects Guido lost ground. In opposing the growing municipalities he was tempted to strain his authority, with the result that he was defied more than once. Thus on one occasion he ordered his vassals at Modigliana to pull down their houses and rebuild them on the hill for greater safety. For five weeks they resisted, then they destroyed their houses and went to Faenza, which was outside their lord's jurisdiction. This led to a war between the Count and the city of Faenza which extended over years. On another occasion he went to Camaldoli and carried off all the weapons which he found there to Poppi. He restored them afterwards, but only in return for an enormous amount of grain. Again he disputed with the

nunnery of Rosano and won his suit, but in this case Countess Gualdrada carried the decision in person to Rosano, and declaring it annulled she tore it up. The acts of Guido Vecchio were such that the Pope wrote to him in his old age urging him to reform his ways, but even the warnings of a Pope were defied with impunity by these barons.

When Count Guido Vecchio died in the year 1213, the family split into five branches, each of his sons taking the name of count of the chief stronghold which fell to his share. Poppi in the first instance fell to Count Guido Magnifico of Bagno, then to his sons Guido Novello and Simone. The acts of these brothers, and the enmity which arose between them, take us into the very thick of the contentions which agitated Florence in the thirteenth century.

The terms Guelf and Ghibelline were used in Florence since 1215, marking the different tendencies of the citizens. The Guidi, like most other rural nobles, were Ghibellines ; they wished to see the power of the city kept within certain limits, and in this they were opposed to the Guelf or patriotic party. Guido Novello and Simone, with other Ghibellines, left Florence for a time in 1248 ; ten years later they were altogether banished from the city. Shortly afterwards they fought at the battle of Montaperti, when the Florentines were beaten

and the river Arbia, as Dante has it, ran red with blood. It was then that Count Guido Novello made the proposal that the city of Florence should be razed from the face of the earth, an insult which the Florentine patriotic party never forgave him. Farinate degli Uberti, also a Ghibelline, but one who felt some affection for the city, successfully opposed him; he is represented by Dante in Hell recalling this fact to the poet's mind. Florence remained standing, but for the next six years it was at the mercy of the Ghibellines. Guido Novello, supported by the troops of King Manfred, ruled in a spirit which was little calculated to soften the acrimony of the Florentines against him. He caused Poppi to be fortified by a new wall in 1260; he then built the Porta Ghibellina at Florence, and constructed a new road out of it so as to be in direct communication with the Casentino. This road (the paved path which leads over the Consuma and along the valley of the Solano) he used to convey to Poppi cross-bows, bucklers and armour which he abstracted from the arsenal at Florence. Villani tells how he showed his castle and these weapons to his uncle Tegrimo, Count of Modigliana and Porciano, asking him what he thought of them. Tegrimo replied that he liked them well enough, but that he knew the Florentines only "lent at a high rate of usury." Sub-

sequent events proved the truth of the remark. When King Manfred was overthrown, Guido Novello lost his support and was obliged to leave Florence. He did so without much dignity, and stones were thrown at him as he left the city. Twenty years later, at the instigation of the Bishop of Arezzo, he and other Ghibellines collected an army in the Casentino to march upon Florence. The Florentines came over the mountains and defeated them and ravaged the territory which belonged to the Guidi. And in the following year they came back and made an assault on Poppi, and finding the arms there which the Count had abstracted, they carried them back to Florence in triumph.

The battle in which the Florentines fought the Ghibellines in the plain of Campaldino below Poppi on June 11, 1289, is memorable since Dante, at the time a youth of twenty-four, fought in the ranks of the victorious Guelfs. He referred to the fact himself in a letter, in which he said how he found himself "no mere child in the practice of arms, and was in great fear, and in the end rejoiced greatly through the varying fortunes of the battle." For luck at first went against the Florentines; the Ghibellines gained an advantage, but they did not follow it up. Guido Novello, who was now an old man, backed upon Poppi, the Bishop

of Arezzo fell fighting, and Buonconte, another Ghibelline leader, was wounded and fled. In the *Divine Comedy* Buonconte is represented giving an account of his flight to Dante — how with pierced and bleeding throat he reached the point where the Archiano falls into the Arno, and how the waters carried him away and his final resting-place was never known.

Guido Novello, who backed upon Poppi, cannot have stayed there, as the place was no longer his and no longer a stronghold of the Ghibellines. It had passed to his brother Simone and his son Guido of Battifolle, and Simone and his son, according to Villani, went over to the Guelfs because of Guido Novello's cruelty. When therefore the Floren-

STATUE OF COUNT GUIDO, CASTLE OF POPPI

tines made an assault on Poppi, they were damaging the property of a Guelf and an ally. Guido of Battifolle, sometimes also called Guido Novello, the son of Simone, pleaded in Florence for damage done to his property, and he received the sum of twelve hundred lire, which he spent in re-building his castle.

It is owing to this sequence of events that the remote little town of Poppi came to boast of its remarkable castle. Vasari in his *Lives of the Painters and Architects* tells us that Jacopo Lapo, called il Tedesco, "built many buildings in the Gothic style in Tuscany, among them the palace at Poppi in the Casentino." And in the life of Arnolfo, whom Vasari wrongly called the son of Jacopo (he was his pupil), he adds that Arnolfo built the palace of the Signory at Florence on the plan of what his father had constructed at Poppi.

As one emerged from the streets and entered the open space before the castle the contrast was striking between our peace-loving, law-abiding age and that period when life was bound up with warfare. Trees veiled in spring foliage cast a fitful shadow over what was formerly an open ground for free fighting; near the ruined castle walls children played and old people loitered in the sun. We entered the courtyard without let or hindrance, and then the sound of a tinkling bell brought out a

Government *custode*. With him we ascended to the first floor by the skilfully-constructed open-air staircase which leads from floor to floor round the four sides of the court. He led the way into the large hall, a beautiful room with carved and coloured beams and double arched windows set high in the thickness of the wall. We wandered from room to room and from storey to storey. Fragments of partitions taken down, of glaring wall-papers torn from the walls, of brick and mortar, lay about here and there—disfigurements of a later date which are now in course of being removed. After centuries of concealment the ceiling construction and the old fresco decorations of the walls were being bared to the light of day, for the castle is now in the hands of the Government and is in course of restoration as a national monument. The palace chapel contained curious frescoes attributed to Spinello Aretino and Jacopo del Casentino. Remains of old wall-painting in curious patterns and of earlier date decorated the dining and other halls. We ascended to the uppermost storey, and there in the way of a caryatide supporting a leafy volute, on which rested the inner cornice of the roof, stood the figure of Count Guido of Battifolle, the son of Simone, carved in stone. It is a beautiful youthful figure, the uncovered head full of clustering curls, the face strong and somewhat

defiant in expression, the body clad in plate-mail, with the one hand holding a short dagger, and the other resting on the hilt of a long sword. Whose the thought thus to place the owner of the palace, who the artist to carry it out, are not recorded, but as it stands the figure may well have delighted him who made it and him whom it represents.

ARMS OF THE GUIDI

## VII

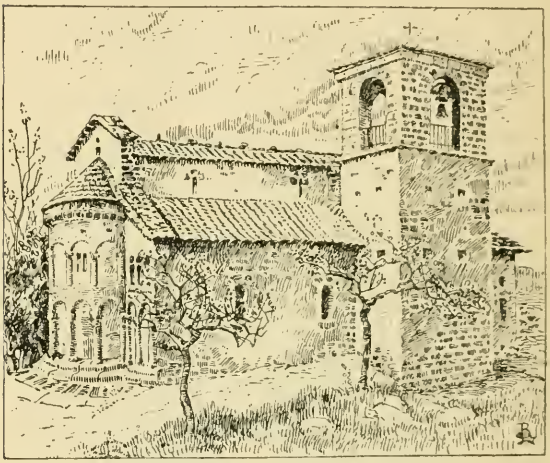
### *Capo d'Arno*

"Per mezzo Toscana si spazia
Un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona
E cento miglia di corso nol sazia."
(*Purg.* 14, 18 ff.)

As one wandered about the palace and the streets of Poppi, the thought arose if and under what circumstances Dante stayed here. He is known to have come into the Casentino during the early part of his exile—that is, about the year 1305; he was here again in March and April of 1311, as is proved by the letters he wrote and dated from here. One of these contains the fierce invective against Florence, the other expresses the fears which the poet apprehended from the Emperor's delay. They are dated "on the confines of Tuscany near the springs of the Arno," and on the strength of this expression the strongholds of Poppi, Romena and Porciano, besides Pratovecchio, claim to have harboured the poet.

These different strongholds, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, were still in the possession of different branches of the Guidi family. The castle of Pratovecchio was owned by Count Guido Selvatico, who belonged to

the branch of the family which embraced Guelf sympathies. He fought on the side of the Guelfs at Campaldino, at Florence he afterwards joined the Neri, and his sympathies



CHURCH OF ROMENA (CASENTINO)

were therefore akin to those of Dante. Boccaccio tells us that Dante enjoyed the hospitality of Guido Selvatico, and this would be during the early part of his exile. The wife of Guido Selvatico was Manessa, the daughter of Buonconte, who perished at Campaldino, and it is generally supposed that Dante's relation to Manessa caused him to introduce

the account of Buonconte's flight into the *Comedy*.

There is extant a letter of Dante, in which he describes how, after setting foot by the streams of the Arno, he made the acquaintance of a woman whom he thought in all respects suited to his inclination, his character and his fortunes. This lady so inspired him that he gave up his resolve to keep aloof from women and from songs about women. He composed a canzone in her praise, a copy of which he appended to the letter. But the lady's name and her whereabouts have always remained a mystery.

From which of the other strongholds Dante dated the letters of 1311 is difficult to decide. The expression "Capo d'Arno" may well refer to Poppi, which is the first place reached coming over the hills from Florence by the old road. Its castle, as we have seen, was owned at this time by the younger Count Guido of Battifolle, who, after his uncle's death, was called Guido Novello, and who, after re-building the castle, quietly dwelt there. He was comparatively peace-loving, and lived on friendly terms with his cousin of Pratovecchio; their sons too were friends. When the Emperor, in 1312, summoned the Guidi to join him in his march on Florence, Guido Novello the younger did not respond to the call, but sent troops in aid of

the city. He became *podestà* of Florence a few years later, and it was during the term of his rule that the proposal was tendered to Dante to return to Florence, but on terms which the poet felt unable to accept.

Villani tells us that this Count Guido caused a large part of the Palazzo Vecchio to be rebuilt on the plan of his palace at Poppi. Perhaps this act caused his portrait to be introduced in a fresco of the Capella degli Spagnuoli, one of the greatest monuments of fourteenth-century art. The Count, who stands as a beardless youth on the staircase at Poppi, is here represented in manhood. He is seen in profile, forming one of a group which includes Cimabue, Boccaccio, Petrarch and Laura.

The wife of this Count Guido was Gherardesca, the daughter of Count Ugolino, who with his sons died of starvation at Pisa. The description of their sufferings is among the most terrible of the *Divine Comedy*. Several letters have recently come to light addressed by Gherardesca to Margaret, the consort of the Emperor, and, partly because these letters are preserved with the letters of Dante, partly because of certain peculiarities in their style, the opinion has been advanced that they were drafted by Dante. One of them is of the year 1311 and is dated from Poppi.

Among the *Novelle*, or short stories, which

Sacchetti put into writing in the fourteenth century, one (nr. 179) tells what befell one day when Countess Gherardesca of Poppi, and Countess Manessa of Pratovecchio, were crossing Campaldino together. It is intended to illustrate the sharp tongue and ready wit of the female sex. Gherardesca was a proud lady, and she attracted her companion's attention to the promising state of the harvest. With reference to the defeat of the Ghibellines there, among whom Buonconte, Manessa's father, had fought, she remarked that the corn no doubt stood so high in consequence of the blood that had been spilt there. But Manessa met her in the same spirit. Alluding to the death by starvation of Ugolino, the father of Gherardesca, she replied that they would no doubt enjoy a fine harvest provided they did not die of starvation before it was ripe. Gherardesca pretended not to understand, and so they continued their walk together in peace.

While Dante's relations with the owner of Poppi leave room for conjecture, his connection with the Counts of Romena rests on a firm foundation. The stronghold of Romena, judging by the position and extent of its ruins, was the most imposing castle of the Casentino.

There was a Count Alessandro of Romena who was a leader of the Guelfs of Tuscany against the Ghibellines in 1288. He afterwards

joined the Bianchi and was expelled from Florence. Later we find him captain of the exiles at Arezzo. He led the attack on Florence which ensued, and died shortly afterwards. Dante then addressed a letter of condolence to his nephews, the Counts Oberto and Guido of Romena, in which he deplored the death of one who had such greatness of soul, and added much to his praise. He would have come to the funeral but that, being an exile, he was deprived of the necessary horses and arms.

The idea has been accepted by some scholars and rejected by others that this Count Alessandro was identical with the Count of Romena of the same name, who, with Guido and another brother, employed the forger Adamo of Brescia to coin false florins at Romena. The reader of Dante is familiar with the figure of Adamo, whom the poet found in Hell, suffering from dropsy and terrible thirst. He told him how he was burnt alive for his acts at Romena, and how he longed for the sight of those who employed him—one of the counts, he has heard, is already in Hell. Falsified florins were discovered in 1281 ; a cairn on the road above Romena is popularly held to mark the spot where Adamo was burnt. It is locally known as the "Maccia del Uomo Morto," and travellers not many years back were wont to throw a stone on it in passing. The genealogy of the owners of Romena, how-

ever, remains a matter of dispute. On the face of it, it seems improbable that Dante thought well of the abettor of a forger, or relegated a man he admired to Hell. Still these were stirring times of changing sympathies, and though the view has been advanced that there were two Counts Alessandro, uncle and nephew, the evidence brought forward by Passerini, who argues that there was but one, has never been conclusively disproved.

Above Romena, at the head of the valley, lie the ruins of Porciano, and the expression "Capo d'Arno," if taken literally, would apply to it. But Dante's relation with its counts is based on legend only. They were a set of lawless, changeful men. There was a Count Guido of Porciano who was condemned in 1282 by the city of Florence to pay five thousand lire for murder, theft and arson. He had eight sons, and several of them were fined in 1291 for waylaying and robbing a merchant from Ancona. In 1311 five of the brothers received the ambassadors of the Emperor at San Godenzo and swore fealty to the Imperial cause, but four of them afterwards deserted it. If Dante thought favourably of those of Porciano for their Imperial sympathies, it cannot have lasted. For in describing the sources of the Arno in the *Comedy* he says that the river takes its rise among "foul hogs more worthy of galls than of any food

made for the use of man," with obvious reference to the meaning of the word *porci* as contained in the place-name Porciano.

A tradition is preserved, according to which the poet was kept prisoner at Porciano, possibly after the battle of Campaldino. An anecdote intended to illustrate his ready wit is localised here. The poet, we are told, had left the castle and was walking down the hill when he met some men from Florence, who were sent to take him into custody. They did not recognise him, and asked if Dante were at Porciano, and he replied, "He was there while I was!"

There seemed no end to the stories associated with Dante which were localised in this neighbourhood. Palmieri, a writer of the early fifteenth century, described an incident, which he says befell Dante on Campaldino. The poet and the triumphant Guelfs after the battle pursued the enemy as far as Bibbiena and beyond it, and on the third day they returned to look for their friends and to bury the dead. Dante found a friend, who either "was not quite dead or else suddenly revived," and who proceeded to describe what he had seen during these days of Hell and Purgatory, words through which the whole plan of the *Comedy* was revealed to Dante. The account contains expressions which recall Dante's description, still it is sufficiently distinct. It

rambles on over about half a dozen pages in print without definite plan or purpose.

It was with a feeling of regret that we left Poppi, which played so important a part in the history of the district. We left it early one morning and crossed Campaldino, now, as six hundred years ago, green with sprouting corn. Beyond it the driving road over the Consuma begins its steady ascent along a mountain spur which is formed by the Arno and its tributary the Solano. The old road branched off, following the course of the Solano, and up this we went to explore.

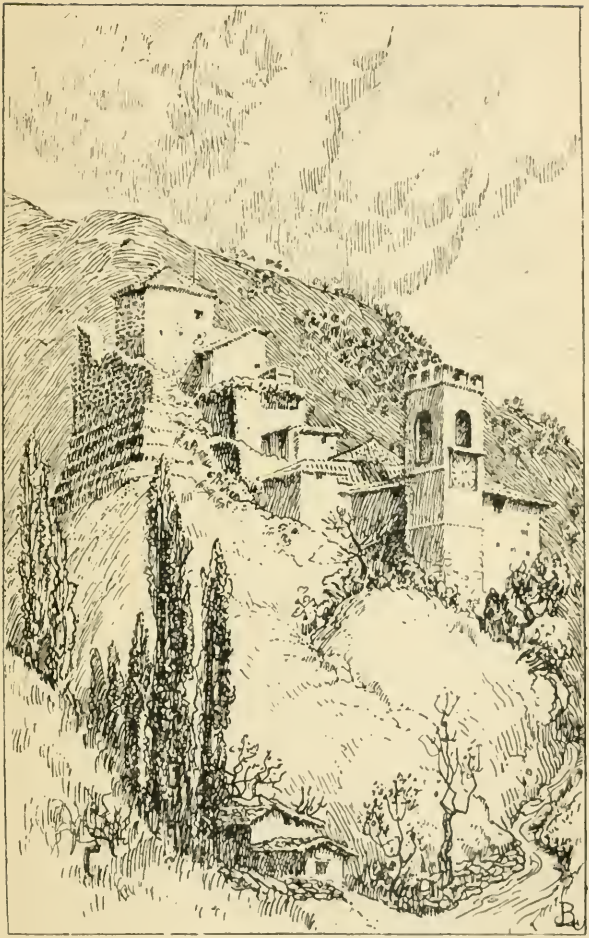
I presume that foreigners carrying knapsacks for their convenience do not often walk in these parts. We had been accosted before and asked what our *roba* was, and women especially joined us along the road in hopes of driving a bargain in needles and scissors. In the valley of the Solano our appearance brought concern to the heart of a professional pedlar, who eyed us askance. When we came down the valley again in the afternoon we were met by a woman, who told us she had been looking out for us ever since we went past in the morning; might she see our wares? She too looked upon us as rivals of the pedlar.

We found the narrow, tortuous valley of the Solano oppressive and unattractive, and we did not penetrate much beyond Strada San

Niccolo, a town of high houses built close between the mountain sides. Here too the history of many centuries lay condensed, as it were, in a nutshell. The ancient church near the castle, now deserted—the ruins of the castle itself, long a stronghold of the Guidi, which the growing Commune destroyed in the fifteenth century—the modern city with its manufactories —each represented a special phase in the history of growing civilisation.

The city of Borgo-alla-Collina on the Consuma road, to which we returned, bore a very different character. Situated on a breezy height, its wide streets were grass-grown, and its low, rambling houses looked desolate. Here Christofero Landini, the author of the *Conversations of Camaldoli*, spent the last years of his life. He had been the teacher of Lorenzo the Magnificent; he afterwards became Chancellor of the Republic of Florence, and a palace at Borgo was given him in acknowledgment of his services. Ampère, in his *Voyages dantesques*, tells an amusing incident which happened to him here. A priest offered to show him the uncorrupted body of a saint, and he showed Ampère a dried mummy in a sarcophagus. But when Ampère looked at the inscription on the sarcophagus he saw that the holy man here displayed was none other than Landini.

We did not stay to see the wonderful relic.



CASTEL SAN NICCOLO

The crispness of the air outside and the panorama of the hills had greater attractions. The road above Borgo commanded a wide field of view, and the eye was free to roam across the valley where the Arno flowed fed by many streams, and to the heights around. The valley was closed in by the Falterona, which is the highest mountain of this part of the Apennines; it rises to an elevation of 5434 ft.

After an hour's walk we deviated to Romena, where we spent some time in the ancient church which flanks the hill. We greatly admired the old column capitals, one of which bears the date 1152. Beni's guide-book says that the church also possesses an ancient bell, with the date 1186, and the words "Mentem Sanctam Deo Placentem."

From Romena we left the road and descended by a path to Pratovecchio, a large rambling place, which seemed to have no special attraction. We then pushed on to Stia, which lies at the confluence of the Arno and the Staggia; above it rise the ruins of the castle of Porciano.

Stia is a picturesque city. Its market-place, set on rising ground, with houses jutting out from both sides, suggested the arrangements of scene decoration. Its ancient church is unattractive ftom outside, but beautiful within. Stia is a convenient centre for walks, but we

thought badly of its *Albergo Alpina*, and would give the preference another time to the inn at Pratovecchio, the situation of which is quite as convenient. The Falterona is usually ascended from Stia, but the snow that had recently fallen made the ascent impossible. We were even prevented from penetrating to the fir woods which have been planted in honour of Dante near the sources of the Arno, a spot to which the expression "Capo d'Arno" is now currently applied. Our walks were limited to the valleys and the lower heights, but we thereby saw more of the people than we should have done otherwise. They were courteous and friendly and charmed us by their unaffected ways. In Dante's ears the speech of the inhabitants of the Casentino sounded harsh and ugly; to us their Italian seemed correct and clear, and we were struck more than once by their conversational ease.

With pleasure we recalled a homestead on the road to San Godenzo, in which seemed to linger that unaffected rusticity of classic times which the Georgics of Virgil have preserved for us. We were sheltering from a shower in an outhouse when the woman of the farm came out and invited us in. We entered a long low room with a window at each end, the further one looking out into the distance of the hills. The room seemed dark at first, but

as one's power of vision readjusted itself to the mellow light, the wide hearth stood forth with its glowing embers with the children hanging round. Earthenware pots and plates shone bright from shelves against the wall ; and the board and the benches, all rounded and polished with use, also caught the reflection from the glow. One of the children threw on some crackling sticks ; two others, dark-haired and red-cheeked, came and clung about their mother. Rickety chairs were placed for us near the hearth, then the woman resumed her low seat and went on winding her yarn. In her rough homespun, with her little ones about her, she looked a picture of health and vigour. She readily talked of her home and the children's varying ways, and of the mill at Stia to which she was sending the yarn which she had spun. Presently the husband too came in, a figure such as one associates with the hills, tall and well-made. He began cleaning his gun, and with the same friendliness talked of the hares he had shot, and of the sport still in store for him. They seemed a happy family, making us welcome with the simple dignity which is so marked a feature in the Italian peasant, and speeding us on our way with the wish that for our sake the weather might improve.

Yet another interior remains with me, the

workshop of a cobbler below Porciano. Here a number of houses stood huddled together against the slope of the hill. The word *vino*, roughly painted in red on a wall that faced the road at an angle, attracted our attention, for we were thirsty, as one often is in a country where one feels suspicious of the water, and we entered. The hale, white-haired cobbler rose from his stool and motioned us to a seat with a certain formality. He then reached two glasses and a huge straw-covered flagon from the shelf, drew out the bit of tow that closed its mouth, and flicked on the floor the drops of oil that floated on the wine, and a little of the wine itself. Here was a reasonable basis for the offer of a libation! Then he filled our glasses, and resuming his work spoke of a son in America, and of the love of change and the growing desire for travel in the younger generation. We too were travelling: whence had we come, whither were we bound? His caustic aptness of speech recalled the saying that the smell of leather sharpens a man's wits. We had been puzzled that day by a roadside shrine dedicated to a saint Mona Giovanna, and I asked about her, hazarding the remark that his trade was known to go with love of reading. He seemed pleased, and pointing to a small store of books he said he could oblige us, and drew forth the story of the saint in the cheap form in which

these stories circulate among the peasantry. In this case it was the question of a woman whose claim to holiness the folk endorsed, while the clergy refused to accept it. Finally the bells at Stia tolled of their own accord as she entered the town, and the candle she was carrying to the shrine was miraculously set alight. In the pantheon of the saints Giovanna has found a place in connection with Bagno on the further side of the hills, but the cobbler was sure about the miracle happening at Stia, and the book confirmed his belief.

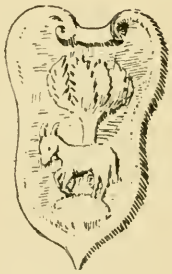
This was one of several occasions on which I engaged in conversation with the people on their local saints. Many of the stories which have been worked into legends, and now go to swell the bulk of the *Acta Sanctorum*, are fresh in the mind of the folk, and a question or two draws from them an account of most wondrous wonders which happened in these districts. The incidents are related in sober earnest, but sometimes the narrator ends with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders. "This is what they say, as to when it happened, *chi lo sa?*" The chief saint of the district, of whom many wonders are told, is St Torello, the saint of Poppi, whose image faces that of the abbot Fedele of Strumi in the chief church of the place. The wonders worked by Torello chiefly refer to wolves, his

power over them was such, that he succeeded in taming one and turning him practically into a dog. In our British Isles the wonder of taming the wolf and setting him to guard the sheep, "which he does to this present day," is attributed to the woman saint Modwen who came into England from Ireland. Torello seems to have been content to have the wolf as his companion, and those who called upon him against wolves henceforth found protection. The learned editors of the *Acta Sanctorum* suggested that Torello lived in the eleventh century, but his legend, as it was put into writing by an inhabitant of Poppi, contains lingering pre-Christian superstitions. The great wolf locally called "Moninus," whom he put under a ban, seems to be unknown except in this district. Torello is also called upon by the people to protect them against famine and the plague.

The driving road over the Consuma to Florence is a well planned road, which rises to a height of 3435 ft. On the day when we crossed the mountains the weather gave a peculiar grandeur to the wildness of the surroundings. We joined the road above Romena and cast a farewell look back on the Casentino. It stretched away in a sunny morning haze, with the hills of Poppi and Bibbiena just visible, and

the heights of La Verna overshadowed by clouds. The road went steadily rising through scenery which became more and more bleak and desolate. We passed Casaccia, a solitary inn, since turned into a private house, and appropriated to some society. After passing Casaccia the road wound in and out at about the same height till a gap in the hills was reached, down which one looked down into the valley of the Solano; the old path here joined the new road. In this valley a storm was brewing. Clouds came rolling up, but they could not prevail against the strong wind which blew from the pass. It was grand to see the masses of blue and purple and black, rolled back on each other in the valley, more and more densely packed. Every now and then a streak of cloud escaped and ran under shelter of a rock till it met the wind, which seized it and scattered it and dashed it towards us in the form of blinding snow. On the further side of the pass the weather was settled and fine. The sun shone clear and a blue sky spanned the distant view towards the Mediterranean. This view was limited in the north only by the distant mountains of Carrara; in the south it embraced Florence and all the hills around it, spreading away to the flatness of the distant coast. And in the glow of the late afternoon sun we once

more caught sight of the Arno in the near distance. We had left it a rushing mountain stream at Stia; we now beheld it again a broad, shining river, flowing beneath the city of Florence.



## HINTS FOR THE TRAVELLER

The Casentino is reached from Florence.

—by rail *via* Arezzo (55 miles, 6 trains daily, in 1½-4 hours) and Bibbiena (20 miles, 3 trains daily, in 1½ hours). The railway goes on to Poppi, Pratovecchio and Stia, the terminus of the line lying midway between the two latter towns which are about a mile apart.

—or by rail to Pontassieve, *Albergo del Vapore*, *Locanda della Stazione*, *Restaurant Piselli*, and from there by carriage road over the Consuma Pass to Stia or Pratovecchio. A diligence starts daily from Pontassieve for Stia at 2.30 in the afternoon (3 lire), and for Pontassieve from Stia at 11 o'clock in the morning. At Pontassieve carriages in the inns mentioned above. To Stia one-horse carriage, 12 lire; two-horse carriage, 24 lire. Carriages from Pontassieve to Camaldoli, 25 lire and 40 lire.

—or by rail to St Ellero, the station beyond Pontassieve, and on by steep grade line to Saltino (trains vary according to the season) and Vallombrosa. At Saltino *Hotel Vallombrosa*, *Hotel Croce di Savoia*, and ten minutes further *Hotel Castello di*

*Acquabella* (all large and with modern comforts). From Saltino carriage road 1½ miles to Vallombrosa, *Albergo della Foresta*, *Villino Medici* (recommended). From Vallombrosa a road ending in a footpath across the mountains reaches the Consuma road near Consuma, about two hours' walk.

Convenient centres for excursions are Bibbiena, *Albergo Amorosi*; Poppi, *Restaurant and pension Gelati*, *Albergo Vezzosi*, near the station; Pratovecchio, *Albergo Spigliantini*, *Albergo Bastieri*; Stia, *Albergo della Stazione Alpina*, *Albergo Falterona*.

**Bibbiena** is situated on a hill fifteen minutes' walk from the station, fare 50 c. In the church of San Lorenzo are two *della Robbias*.

Excursions from Bibbiena.

—to La Verna (inn) by road, 7½ miles. Two-horse carriage from Bibbiena, 15-20 lire. The monastery, which is visible from afar, consists of several parts which date from different periods. The road on leaving Bibbiena passes the interesting Dominican monastery Madonna del Sasso, founded in 1347, and enlarged in 1486. It then passes Campi, crosses the Corsalone and ascends through a wood and along rocky slopes. Outside the monastery lies the Cappella degli Uccelli, where flocks of birds welcomed St Francis on his first visit. The oldest part is the Cappella degli Angeli, built in 1216. This

contains three *della Robbias*. The large church was begun in 1348 by Tarlato, Count of Pietramala. This contains several *della Robbias*. The small church of the Stigmata was built in 1263 by Count Simone of Battifolle, as is indicated by a well-cut inscription at the entrance. It contains a very fine *della Robbia*. Below this chapel is the Sasso Spicco, whence the devil hurled St Francis, and the cave, called St Francis's Bed, whence a raven used to call him every night to matins. In the Luoghi Santi, St Francis frequently stayed. A path leads to the chapel, three-quarters of an hour above the convent, from which there is an extensive view, and beyond ascends the Penna. Below lies Chiusi di Casentino, formerly looked upon as *Clusium Novum*, mentioned by Pliny. Here Ludovico Buonarotti was *podestà* at the time when his son Michel Angelo was born at Caprera, a short distance to the south-east.

—to Ortignano, an hour's drive along the valley of the Teggina. A beautiful view of Bibbiena looking back. A paved path leads from the road up to Ortignano, and beyond to the church, which contains a beautiful Virgin and Child by *Matteo di Giovanni*. Along the road beyond Ortignano lies Raggiolo (inn), with the ruins of a castle which was held by the Ubertini (1325), and passed from them to the Tarlati. From Raggiolo the Prato Magno is

sometimes ascended, about two and a half hours' walk, guide necessary.

—to Badia a Prataglia, a rising summer resort, *Albergo Mulinacci*, and at Boscoverde, 2700 ft., a summer pension, 10 miles. Diligence from Bibbiena, 2 lire ; one-horse carriage, 8 lire. The road follows the valley of the Archiano and passes Camprena. The ruins of Gressa (formerly of the bishops of Arezzo and taken by the Florentines in 1259) and of Marciano (granted to Badia a Prataglia in 1084) are visible on the right. At Partina are ruins of a castle held by the Guidi till 1389. Serravalle, with its tower of 1188, is visible on the left. A driving road leading up to it from beyond the bridge is in course of construction, and several new villas have been built near the old village. The Archiano is here joined by the Fosso of Camaldoli. A path this side of the bridge leads along the valley to Camaldoli. Another path further up over the hills also leads through the woods to Camaldoli. Badia a Prataglia, founded about the year 980, was associated with Camaldoli in the twelfth century, and for a time suppressed. The church has an interesting crypt with romanesque columns, now used as a wood store. The old monastery adjoining the church is now a private villa. Beyond Badia the road ascends, and from the height of the pass Bagno in Romagna is visible. From Badia

to Bagno 10, to Forli 58 miles. Interesting short walks to the confluence of the Arno and Archiano, and to Memmenano, where is a fine *della Robbia*.

**Poppi** lies on a hill, fifteen minutes' walk from the station. The castle is being restored. It is the work of Jacopo Lapo. On the top of the staircase Count Guido of Battifolle. The chapel contains frescoes attributed to Spinello Aretino and Jacopo da Casentino, and other fresco decorations have been uncovered in the dining hall. In the church of the Augustinians a poor *della Robbia*. Another *della Robbia* outside the Casa Bremasole. The parochial church, beautifully situated, contains several good paintings, including a Virgin of Franciabigio, others attributed to Guido da Siena, and the head of St Torello, the patron saint of the district, in silver gilt casing.

Excursions from Poppi

—to Camaldoli by road 8 miles. One-horse carriage, 7-10 lire. In summer months a diligence. The older bad road is by Lierna, the new one leaves Ragginopoli to the right. Both contain ruins of strongholds owned by the Guidi. The monastery of Camaldoli lies in a wooded valley on a rocky slope of the Apennines. A few of the more aged and infirm monks remain here, but the greater part of the monastery is

turned into a hotel, *Grande Albergo*, with every comfort. The monastery founded by St Romuald in 1018 was destroyed by fire in 1203, but the old convent court remains unchanged. It owned an early printing press, and the famous *Annali Camaldolensi*, 907-1764, were written here. The church, which was injured in 1498 when the monastery was besieged by the Duke of Urbino, was rebuilt in 1523, and contains three paintings by Vasari. It was restored 1772-1776. The monastery was suppressed in 1866 and belongs to the Woods and Forest Department of the State. The majority of the monks have retired to the hermitage. This lies three-quarters of an hour up the glen above the convent, along a paved path, at a height of 3700 ft. Visitors are shown over the church and the cell of St Romuald by one of the monks. Beyond the hermitage a path leads to the Prato al Soglio, fine and extensive view, and across the hills to Badia a Prataglia. In the opposite direction a footpath to Lonnano and Poppiena. Fine walk along the ridge to Monte Falterona.

—to Fronzola, with the remains of a castle besieged by Count Simone of Battifolle in 1344. The road leads on to Raggiolo.

—to Borgo alla Collina and Strada San Niccolo (inn). The road follows the valley and crosses Campaldino, the site of the famous

battle. At Certomondo there is a church and cloister of the fifteenth century. Near here were found Etruscan remains in 1846. The road to the Consuma Pass diverges to the left. Borgo alla Collina (inn), six miles from Poppi, has an old church containing a Virgin and saints of 1423. The new church contains the body of Cristofero Landini, Chancellor of the Republic of Florence. From the road extensive views of the valley. To the left a road leads to Strada. Interesting church of San Martino in Vado with many curious column capitals, similar in style to those of Romena and Stia. On the further side of the river lies the ruined Castel S. Niccolo, one of the great strongholds of the Guidi, with church, also in ruins. A road diverges to the right to Cajano. Of the Castle of Battifolle only a few stones are left. From Cajano the paved road in a steep ascent reaches the high road between Casaccia and Consuma. From Strada the road along the Scheggia ends in a path by which it is possible to reach Montemignajo, a stronghold of the Guidi, of which the tower, a vast cistern, and part of the walls are left. In the church of Santa Maria, are column capitals, similar in style to those of Romena, etc. To reach Montemignajo driving, it is necessary to drive almost to the height of the pass between Casaccia and Consuma, branching off to the left. From

Montemignajo a rough path leads to the Croce Vecchia and on to Vallombrosa.

—to Pratovecchio (6 miles) the road follows the valley of the Arno. The place, large and rambling, is closely connected with the history of the Guidi. There are extant the ruins of towers and remains of the ancient walls and fortifications. The convent church of the Dominican nuns contains several seventeenth century paintings. From Pratovecchio three different paths, the one *via* Lonnano, the other *via* Casalino, the third *via* Moggiona, lead to Camaldoli.

**Stia** lies on the confluence of the Staggia and the Arno. The church (La Pieve) is of the twelfth century, partly modernised, but contains interesting round arches and carved column capitals. It is said to have been built by Countess Matelda. In the church several *della Robbias*. In the town hall a beautiful *della Robbia*. Also in the *Oratorio della Madonna del Ponte* a polychrome *della Robbia*. In the bed of a small lake north-east of Stia, during the drought of 1838, were discovered many Etruscan antiquities.

Excursions from Stia and Pratovecchio

—to Monte Falterona (5434 ft.) about four hours. Guide advisable (5 frs.). The usual way is by Porciano, an ancient stronghold of the Guidi. From here following the path in a northerly

direction to the Capo d'Arno, from where by a steep ascent to the refuge *Ricovero Dante* built by the Italian Alpine Club. (The key procurable at the house of Signor Beni at Stia, or of the Secretary of the Club at Florence.) In the club hut only bare bedsteads. On a clear day the view extends to the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian. From Falterona a splendid walk along the mountain ridge to Camaldoli.

—to Santa Maria delle Grazie, at one time a dependency of Vallombrosa, sometimes called Vallombrosella. The church, beautifully situated, dates from the end of fifteenth century. Some good pictures and several beautiful *della Robbias*. The ruins of Castel Castagnajo, and of Campo Lombardo, strongholds of the Guidi, are seen on the further side of the river. A path leads on to the mountain village Vallucciole. Another road along the valley of the Staggia leads to Gaviserri branching off to the left to Papiano, near which are the ruins of Urbech, a stronghold of the Guidi.

—to the Castle and Church of Romena along the road which joins the main road over the Consuma. The Castle ruins are in a commanding position and are visible from afar. The site in 1034 was in the power of Count Guido Alberti of Spoleto, and passed into the family of the Guidi through marriage. It passed to Florence in 1357. An inscription records Dante's stay

here during his exile. Half a mile below lie the ruins of the church, built in 1152, as mentioned on one of the column capitals. The road passes Fonte Branda. The church, which contains some good paintings, has been restored. Beyond Romena the road returns to the main road which rises to Omo Morto, a heap of stones that is popularly associated with Maestro Adamo of Brescia, and beyond to Casaccia and the pass over the Consuma.

# INDEX


Adamo of Brescia, 118, 141.
Ampère, *Voyages dantesques*, 11, 122.
Apennines, 57, 77 ff.
Archiano, 57, 78, 109, 136.
Arezzo, trains from, 133.
Arno, valley of the, 1; sources of, 113 ff.
Arnolfo Lapo, 110.

Badia a Prataglia, 10, 85, 87; inns at and situation, 136.
Badia a Tega, 10.
Bagno, 56, 68, 136.
Battifolle, 90; ruins of, 139.
Beni, guide book of, 49, 125; address of, 141.
Bibbiena, 2, 13 ff.; market-place, 14; inns at and excursions from, 134.
Bibbiena, Cardinal, 13, 17, 21 ff.
Borgo alla Collina, 122; situation of, 138,
Boscoverde, pension at, 136.
Buonconte, killed at Campaldino, 114, 117.

Cajano, 139.
*Calandra*, 26 ff.
Camaldoli, 2, 51 ff.; views of, 53, 73; landmark of, 76; approaches of, 133, 136; inns at and excursions from, 137; paths to, 140.
Campaldino, 114, 120, 138.
Campi, 134.
Campo Lombardo, 141.
Camprena, 55.
Capo d'Arno, 113 ff.; paths to, 140.
Cappella degli Uccelli, 134.
Caprera, 135.
Casaccia, 131, 139.
Casalino, 140.
Castel Castagnajo, 141.
Castel San Niccolo, 139; view of, 123.
Castiglione on Cardinal Bibbiena, 22 ff.
Certomondo, 139.
Chiusi di Casentino, 135.
Consuma, 107, 121, etc.; driving road over, 133; paths leading to, 134, 139, 141.
*Conversations of Camaldoli*, 80 ff.
Corsalone, 35, 134.
*Cortegiano, il*, 24 ff.

Dante, on the Guidi, 7; connection with the Guidi, 93, 113 ff.; on St Francis, 44; on St Romuald, 10.
Della Robbia, at Bibbiena, 17, 134; at La Verna (frontispiece), 46, 49, 134; at Memmenano, 137; at Poppi, 137; at Santa Maria, 141; at Stia, 140.
Divizio, Angelo, 32; Bernardo, *see* Bibbiena, Cardinal.

Eremo, 63, 78 ff., 138.
Etruscan remains, 2, 18, 139.

Faenza at war with Guidi, 105.
Falterona, 1, 113, 125; ascent of, 140.
Fedele of Strumi, 129.
Florence at war with Guidi, 105.
Fonte Branda, 63, 142.
Forli, road to, 101, 137.
Fosso of Camaldoli, 78, 136.

# Index


Francis, St, 5, 10, 11, 33 ff.; portrait of (frontispiece).
Fronzola, 138.

Gaviserri, 141.
Gherardesca, Countess, 116, 117.
Giovio on Cardinal Bibbiena, 22, 29.
Gisla, Countess, 94.
Gressa, 55, 136.
Gualdrada, Countess, 95, 104 ff.
Guidi, Counts, 90 ff.; Guido, 95; Guido *il Marchese*, 97, 102; Guidoguerra, 98, 101; Guido Vecchio, 104, 106; Guido Magnifico, 106; Guido Novello, 106 ff.; Guido Selvatico, 113; Guido of Battifolle, 115, his portrait, 109; Guido Novello the younger, 115; Tegrimo, 94; Tegrimo Bevisangue, 94; Tegrimo of Modigliana, 107; Simone of Battifolle, 48, 106, 135; Alessandro of Romena, 117 ff.; Oberto and Guido of Romena, 118; arms of, 112.

Jacopo del Casentino, 46, 111, 137.
Jacopo Lapo, 110, 137.

Landini, Cristofero, 11, 80 ff.; relic of, 139.
La Verna, 5, 11, 33 ff.; views of, 3, 34, 43; description of, 134.
Lierna, 137.
Lonnano, 138, 140.

Maccia del Uomo Morto, 118.
Madonna del Sasso, 35, 134.
Maldolo, Count, 71.
Malespini on Guidi, 95.
Manessa, Countess, 114, 117.
Marciano, 55, 136.
Mariotto, 82.
Matelda, Countess, 96, 97, 140.
Medici in the Casentino, 21, 81 ff.; princess at Eremo, 77.
Memmenano, 137.
Moggiona, 140.
Mona Giovanna, 128.
Montemignajo, 97, 139.

Orlando, Count, 46.
Ortignano, 135.
Otto of Freysing on Guidi, 101.
Ozanam on St Francis, 40, 41.

Pappiano, 141.
Passerini on Guidi, 119.
Penna, 33, 50; ascent of, 135.
Peter Damian, 64, 65.
Pontassieve, inns at, 133.
Poppi, 75, 89, 90 ff.; views of, 91, 99, 109; inns at, 134; excursions from, 137.
Poppiena, 138.
Porciano, 90, 95, etc.
Prato al Soglio, 85, 138.
Pratomagno, 18, 76; ascent of, 135.
Pratovecchio, 46, 113, 125; inns at, 134; excursions from, 140.

Ragginopoli, 136.
Raggiolo, 135, 138.
Romena, 90, 97, 98; view of, 114; ways to, 141.
Romuald, St, 5, 10, 51 ff., 80, etc.
Ruskin on St Francis, 39, 41.

Sacchetti on Countesses at Poppi, 117.
Saltino, hotels at, 133.
San Martino di Vado, 97, 139.
Santa Maria delle Grazie, 141.
Sasso Spicco, 135.
Scheggia, 139.
Serravalle, 59, 85, 89, 136.
Soci, 55, 56, 57, 90.
Solano, 97, 121.
Staggia, 125, 141.
Stia, 97, 125, 133; inns at, 134; excursions from, 140.
Strava San Niccolo, 121; situation of, 138.
Strumi, 94, 129.

Tarlati, 20, 22; of Pietramala, 56.
Teggina, 135.
Tolosanus on Guidi, 101.
Torello, St, 129 ff., 137.

Urbech, 141.

Vallombrosa, inns at, 134.
Vallucciole, 141.
Vasari, 46, 89, 90, 110, 138.
Villani, 95, 109, 116.


THE END


*Colston & Coy. Limited, Printers, Edinburgh*

Over 2000 feet outlined thus ..... Over 3000 feet outlined thus

# A LIST OF DENT'S COUNTY GUIDES

EDITED BY GEORGE A. B. DEWAR.

IN issuing this series of books the publishers believe that they are making a departure, no less welcome than needful, from the usual lines on which such Handbooks are compiled. What they have endeavoured to do for the historic Towns of Europe in their "Mediæval Town Series," they now hope to accomplish for the Counties of England, by presenting their unrivalled attractions in such a way as shall no longer make a guide-book a weariness to the flesh.

Their object is to produce a series of books at once thoroughly readable and thoroughly efficient as tourist guides.

The volumes will be redolent of the fresh open air and the country side. Natural History and Sport in their various branches will be in the hands of experts living in the districts described. The Scenery and History of each interesting spot will be written of by a man of letters who knows and loves his own county.

Each volume is divided into three parts. PART I., dealing with the "Story and Scenery" of the county, consists of Itineraries devoted to its characteristic districts; and it is intended that these sections, though independent of each other, may form a connected whole fit to be read through as are the chapters of a book. To make the "Story and Scenery" of the county readable as a whole, it has been necessary to condense into PART III. "A County Gazetteer," much antiquarian and other information about towns, villages, and churches, together with indispensable directions of a purely practical character about trains, hotels and inns, and the like. PART II. consists of articles on the Natural History and Sport of the county, contributed by writers who have studied these subjects on the spot, together with a chapter specially intended for the use of cyclists.

## LIST OF VOLUMES

*Each with numerous Topographical Illustrations, Sectional Plans accompanying the Itineraries, and a County Map. Fcap. 8vo (convenient for the pocket), cloth gilt, tinted edges, 4s. 6d. net per volume.*

THE LAKE COUNTIES. By W. G. Collingwood, with Special Articles on: Birds, by Mary L. Armitt; Butterflies and Moths, by Canon Crewdson; Flora, by S. L. Petty; Geology, by Prof. E. Hull, LL.D.; Fox-hunting, by Rev. E. M. Reynolds, M.F.H.; Mountaineering, by W. P. Haskett Smith; Yachting, by Arthur Severn; Angling, by A. Severn, Junr.; Shooting, by A. Ruskin Severn; Cycling, by A. W. Rumney. [*Spring, 1902.*

SURREY. By Walter Jerrold, with Special Articles on: Birds, by J. A. Bucknill, M.A.; Flowers, by Edward Step, F.L.S.; Entomology, by Rev. J. Vernon; Geology, by Prof. Edward Hull, LL.D.; Cycling, by Duncan Tovey.

*Athenæum.*—"He writes with ample knowledge and enthusiasm, and the volume may be recommended as fully maintaining the high reputation which the series has already gained. . . . Besides Mr. Jerrold's main narrative, which is strong on the antiquarian and literary side, we have special articles . . . which seem excellent."

*Field.*—"Something more than a guide book, though in that direction it would be hard to beat, for while the author is an enthusiast, and writes very pleasantly, he is far from unmindful of those details which, though they may be commonplace, are very valuable."

NORFOLK. By William A. Dutt, with Special Articles on: Birds, by Rev. R. C. Nightingale; Botany, by H. D. Geldart; Entomology, by Claude Morley, F.E.S.; Geology, by F. W. Harmer, F.G.S.; Shooting and Fishing, by A. J. Rudd; Sea Fishing, by E. A. Croxon; Cycling, by H. Morriss.

*Academy.*—"As near a model guide book as may be; the itineraries are ample and well arranged, the maps good, and he discourses pleasantly by the way of matters interesting to more than the mere tourist."

*Daily Chronicle.*—"This little volume is so excellent as far as it goes, has been written with so much cheeriness and love for the Eastern county, is such a miracle of cheapness, and so exactly what the tourist in Norfolk needs during his stay, that we can only speak of it with cordial praise and admiration."

## HAMPSHIRE WITH THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

By GEORGE A. B. DEWAR, with Special Articles on: Botany, by JOHN VAUGHAN; Entomology, by G. M. A. HEWETT; Birds, by G. B. CORBIN; Geology, by Prof. EDWARD HULL, LL.D.; Fishing and Shooting, by the EDITOR; Cycling, by W. M. HARMAN.

*Athenæum.*—"*After a wide and practical experience of guide-books for nearly forty years, we have no hesitation in saying that it is the best of its size* (350 *pp.*) *that we have as yet seen. It is a book that the general antiquary or lover of Nature as well as the country resident will delight to have on their shelves.*"

*Times.*—"The authors have done their work extremely well, . . an immense amount of information presented in an orderly and attractive form."

*County Gentleman.*—"At once practical and romantic, useful and ornamental."

---

## PRESS APPRECIATIONS

*Outlook.*—"Many will bless Messrs. Dent for the happy idea embodied in this series."

*Athenæum.*—"This seems to us an excellent plan, and should produce a kind of volume decidedly superior to the ordinary run of handbooks."

*Daily News.*—"There is no reason why a guide-book should not be artistic and literary, as well as an accurate production, but before the issue of 'Dent's County Guides,' we are not aware that anybody ever thought of making it so."

*Daily Chronicle.*—"We rejoice that the writing of guide-books has come into the hands of men of fine taste, large appreciation, and delicate style, and has for ever escaped from those who, in the past, gave guide-books a reputation for all that was commonplace, banal, and dull. Messrs. Dent are to be much commended."

*Scottish Geographical Magazine.*—"These guide-books may be said to inaugurate a new departure. Instead of bare statistics, dry details, and unattractive forms of ordinary guide-books, we have here dainty little volumes with interesting letterpress, clear maps, and exquisite woodcuts from original sketches. . . . No lover of the beautiful could have more delightful companions."

---

J. M. DENT & Co., BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.

have taken us to the left over the river by Summerset Bridge (so called from the neighbouring farm) and on by the side of Peper Harow Park through one of the lovely lanes which are so characteristic of our Surrey valleys, to where the road turns through the park past the church and mansion, after which we may turn left to Eashing or right down through the Oxenford gateway, and so back to the Godalming road. A very pleasant walk from Eashing is by following the road to Shackleford church and then turning to the right, after pausing to admire the wonderful situation of the church, set by four cross roads in a pleasant woodland, with the few neighbouring houses hidden in the trees. The village of Shackleford, a good half mile further ahead, is well worth a visit; it is one of the many places in the county which have yielded relics of the Roman occupation. Following the road to the right we ascend fairly rapidly to the quaint hillside hamlet of Hurtmore, a little way beyond which we reach a height of over three hundred and thirty feet and have beautiful views all round—south and west over Godalming and the Wey valley and north to the Hog's Back. Continuing, we shortly see on our right the noble pile of buildings of the great Charterhouse School. Taking the first lane to the right we may descend into Godalming, or continuing

*Specimen Page and Illustration.*

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 001 143 760 5

DG
734
E19t